Commentary
May 2003

The U. S. and Israel: The Road Ahead

Abraham D. Sofaer

Why Our Troops Should Stay in "Old Europe"

Frederick W. Kagan

The Rabbi Crisis

Jack Wertheimer

Into the Void with Daniel Libeskind

Michael J. Lewis

Adult Fiction—A Story

John J. Clayton

When the Civil-Rights Movement Was News

Thomas L. Jeffers

Sondheim's Operas

Terry Teachout

Books in Review

Carol Iannone • David Pryce-Jones • Alex Alexiev
Adam Schulman • Kay S. Hymowitz

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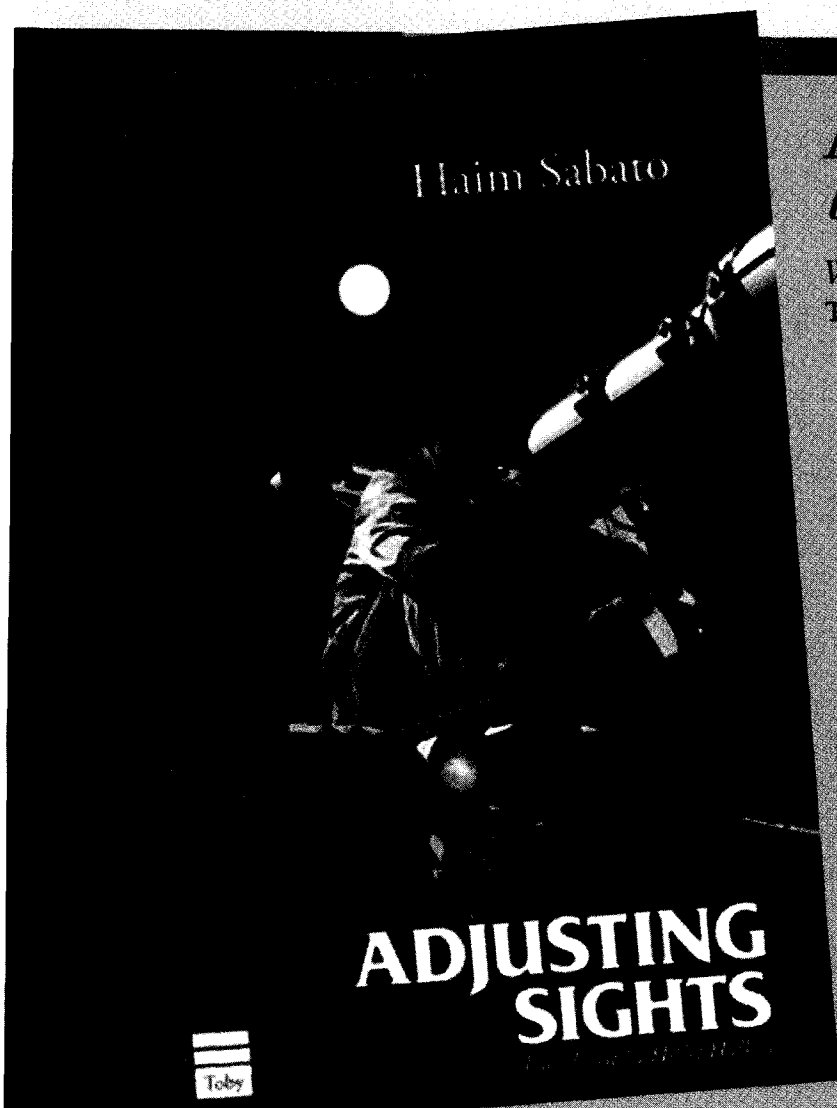

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Vol. 115 · May 2003 · No. 5

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COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) by the American Jewish Committee. EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022. Telephone: (212) 891-1400. Fax: (212) 891-6700. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Letters intended for publication may be edited. Single copy is $4.50; $45 a year, 2 years $79, 3 years $109. Add $11.00 per year for subscriptions to Canada and Mexico, $19.00 for all other foreign destinations. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022.

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Indexed in *Reader's Guide*, *Book Review Digest*, and elsewhere. Available in reference systems produced by ProQuest (800) 521-0600 and the Gale Group (800) 877-4253. U.S. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870. Printed in the U.S.A.

WEBSITE: www.commentarymagazine.com

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Commentary
May 2003

Letters from Readers

Church Scandals

To the Editor:

Daniel Johnson sees the current problems of the Catholic Church too superficially ["The Catholic Crisis," February]. They do not, as he supposes, spring from the tension between George Weigel-type conservative Catholics and Garry Wills-type liberal Catholics. Rather, they have to do with the fact that American Catholics are no longer uneducated immigrants willing to follow a more educated clergy; they have come of age.

The marginalization of the Catholic Church in Western Europe since the French Revolution and in Eastern Europe since the collapse of Communism has caught up with America, once the only advanced nation where Catholics went to Mass in large numbers. As the West has become more educated, prosperous, and self-assured, the Church has increasingly lost its role. Soon Catholicism will be a third-world religion. That the priests have been morally compromised by their own behavior and the papacy by its inaction during the Holocaust only makes the decline of allegiance more rapid than it might otherwise have been.

Norman Ravitch
Savannah, Georgia

To the Editor:

Daniel Johnson posits a struggle for the Church's soul between Catholics like George Weigel, a defender of celibacy and strict sexual morality for the clergy, and Garry Wills, whose position, Mr. Johnson says, is that "human sexuality is a personal issue about which the Church has no business being judgmental."

Sexual misconduct by the nominally celibate Roman Catholic clergy is far older and more prevalent than Mr. Johnson acknowledges. It is depicted in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Henry Charles Lea's classic *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church* (1907) describes how isolated mountain towns sometimes gave a new priest a woman so he would leave other women alone. Indeed, sexual corruption among Catholic clergy was a major cause of the Reformation. The American Church's current sex scandals are therefore nothing new; what is horrendously new is the extent of the pederasty and homosexuality, and the justifications of both by the Church.

How much easier it would be to avoid this sinful behavior if the inborn sexual urges of priests could be satisfied legitimately. It is for this reason that, in the friendliest terms, one can urge the Roman Church to change the celibacy rule it adopted in 1075 and allow its priests to experience once again the sacred joys of marriage.

Nathaniel S. Lehrman
Roslyn, New York

To the Editor:

Daniel Johnson may be correct that the current crisis facing the Catholic Church has its origins in the Second Vatican Council. But the reasons for the crisis—even for Vatican II—diverge widely from what Mr. Johnson would have us believe. In taking at face value George Weigel's thesis regarding the "inculcation" of an "ethos of moral permissiveness" in the Church after Vatican II, Mr. Johnson exhibits symptoms of the very "intellectual paralysis" he imputes to the Church's detractors.

After all, the Church has remained essentially as doctrinaire in the post-World War II period as it was before. The priesthood is still celibate and male, and though John Paul II may be more effective than his predecessors in battling the wider culture, he certainly did not initiate that fight. One only need recall Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*, outlawing oral contraception

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(let alone abortion). Nor have the Church's laws toward homosexuality ever been altered, much less annulled. The Vatican's insistence that the current crisis is an expression more of general homosexual inclinations than of specific pedophiliac tendencies belies the permissive ethos that Mr. Johnson—perhaps following Weigel—finds pervading the Church.

The "terminal decline" of the Church's influence on moral, political, and cultural life in the West, so lamented by Mr. Johnson, did indeed begin when it abrogated what he calls its mission of "challenging the assumptions of its environment." But evidence of this failure can be found well before Vatican II, in the Holy See's well-documented silence during the slaughter of World War II and in its complicity afterward in spiriting members of its "flock" to safety away from tribunals. One could argue that Vatican II was more a response to the aftermath of the Holocaust than a result of libertine tendencies. Once the Church had tacitly admitted its moral shortcomings in one major area, it follows that it might forfeit its moral capital in others.

J. EFRAM TAUB
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

No other institution or religious group has ever been subject to the kind of media scrutiny directed at the Catholic Church in the airing of its dirty laundry. Statistics on other religious and secular organizations indicate that sexual abuse is more serious and more frequent in those quarters. There is a double standard in reporting on the Church, and Daniel Johnson might have noted this as a factor determining how the Church is perceived.

REV. LEONARD F. VILLA
Yonkers, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

On the matter of Garry Wills and Daniel Goldhagen, Daniel Johnson is dead-on correct. Both have skewed the history concerning the relationship between Catholics and Jews in order to push forward their own questionable agendas. In the current debate on the Church and the Holocaust, Goldhagen in particular has added nothing but vacuous posturing.

Though I generally appreciated Mr. Johnson's article, I would add a few nuances. It is not at all clear that, as he writes, "more and more Catholics are staying away from Mass" because of the pedophilia scandal. This may be true in some places, but not, frankly, in my parish, and there are as yet no reliable statistics to back up such a general claim.

This may be because, while some American bishops fumbled, many others did not. Many, in fact, took their cue from Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago in the early 1990's and began to face the scandal head-on, averting the crisis that the Boston archdiocese eventually faced. Quite a number of American bishops, following the lead of Bishop Wilton Gregory, the president of the U.S. bishops' conference, have acted admirably, including Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore, Archbishop Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, and Bishop Harry Flynn of St. Paul-Minneapolis. During this crisis, arguably the greatest it has faced, the American Church hierarchy has not been without leadership.

EUGENE J. FISHER
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to Daniel Johnson for his splendid article. There are some minor blemishes: Garry Wills was never ordained a priest; Pope John XXIII died in 1963, and so did not "carry the 1964 Vatican Council with him," especially since Vatican II ended in 1965; Cardinal "Groener" spells his name Gröer; and the Church critic John Cornwall was never a priest. Still, the article shines with an analytical lucidity that could well serve as the basis for all future investigations of the Catholic Church's entirely self-inflicted scandal.

As Mr. Johnson rightly points out, many of these self-inflicted wounds come from liberal Catholics trying to hijack the crisis for their own purposes. Just as with the record of Pius XII during World War II, where legitimate historical questions suddenly get transformed into rolling pins to beat up conservative Catholics, so too the sex-abuse crisis serves as a useful cudgel in the culture wars now raging inside (and of course outside) the Church, with Garry Wills as the chief browbeater in both cases.

I wish to demur on only one point: Mr. Johnson might prove prematurely pessimistic when he says that the "clergy's fall from grace has exacerbated an already acute falling-off of recruits to the priesthood." This past year I began teaching at the nation's largest Catholic seminary, where there has been a slow but steady up-tick of vocations. Needless to say, morale was hit pretty hard by the scandal, but I have been struck this year not just by the size of the entering class (the largest in some time) but also by the generally upbeat morale at the seminary, where interest in theology is high and the piety virile and unashamed. What long-term effect the scandal will have on recruitment is anyone's guess, but I am struck by how often our national media claim to spot a trend just as it is waning.

Still, there can be no doubt about the wider forces that, as Mr. Johnson observes, act as a kind of downdraft weakening the vision of Vatican II. In one way, the papacy of John Paul II validates the "great men of history" school of historiography. But even the greatest of history's great men cannot play King Canute against forces as large as a resurgent Islam—or, apparently, against the blind spots of bishops who acted more like executives from Enron than as pastors of sheep.

REV. EDWARD T. OAKES
University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Johnson offers the most cogent article to date on the problems facing the Catholic Church. Some of those problems are self-inflicted (the sex-abuse scandal), while others are not (Daniel Goldhagen's demand that the Church implode), but together they

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work to sap the moral authority of a great institution.

Mr. Johnson rightly questions whether the "loyal opposition" of Garry Wills can realistically be considered loyal. Wills rejects Church teachings on celibacy, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, papal infallibility, the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, apostolic succession, the immaculate conception, the assumption, and the Magisterium itself. What we have in Wills is a man so tormented by the thought that he is no longer regarded as a Catholic that he called his last book *Why I Am a Catholic*.

George Weigel's side in this debate carries no such baggage. As Mr. Johnson correctly observes, Catholics who share Weigel's views are angry at the way many in the Church dealt with the scandal, but they are not disloyal to the Church's teachings. That crucial difference explains why it is wrong to posit a moral equivalence between Weigel Catholics and Wills Catholics: the former defend the Church while the latter want to upend it.

As for Goldhagen, it is not his rejection of Church teachings that matters, for of course he is not himself a Catholic, but his demand that the Church reconfigure itself to meet with his approval. Goldhagen insists that the Church change its teachings on such matters as salvation, the meaning of the cross, papal infallibility, and the sacredness of Scripture. He also wants a Third Vatican Council where "Jews would have a full voice" (no doubt with him at the head of the table).

Daniel Johnson knows that the Catholic Church will survive Wills and Goldhagen. The only question worth debating is how long it will take before the Church once again thrives. That will depend, at least in part, on how long it takes before it is recaptured by Weigel Catholics.

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
New York City

DANIEL JOHNSON writes:

Norman Ravitch accuses me of judging the problems of the Catholic Church too superficially, then proceeds to regurgitate the most superficial of clichés: that the resilience of the Church over two millennia is merely a function of the ignorance of the laity. To suggest that Catholic Christianity has historically been inimical to enlightenment is an Enlightenment myth, propagated by savants of the caliber of Voltaire and Gibbon but nonetheless false. After the fall of Rome, the Church was the principal and usually the sole agency for the spread of literacy; the monasteries preserved ancient learning; and the idea of the university, as it emerged in Europe, is a Christian one. To claim, as Mr. Ravitch does, that "as the West has become more educated, prosperous and self-assured, the Church has increasingly lost its role," is to forget that the very notion of "the West" as a cultural phenomenon is unthinkable without the Church.

It is true that educational advances have brought about profound changes in the Church, and conservative Catholics have often stubbornly resisted the rise of the vernacular liturgy. Evelyn Waugh (educated and self-assured enough a Catholic, I hope, even for Mr. Ravitch) quotes Father Ronald Knox telling two fond parents who had requested an English baptism, "The baby doesn't understand English and the Devil knows Latin."

But such an attachment to Latin testifies to a love of learning rather than its opposite. Most of the "uneducated immigrants" to whom Mr. Ravitch disdainfully refers arrived in America generations ago, and most of their descendants remained staunch Catholics long after their educational and social status had been transformed beyond recognition. It was not they who left the Church behind but, all too often, the post-1960's Church that left them. Finally, it seems equally unreasonable to dismiss Catholicism as a "third-world religion," merely on account of its spectacular success in Africa and Asia over the last quarter-century. The decline in church attendance across Europe and America is comparatively recent, and there is no reason to suppose that it is irreversible.

Nathaniel S. Lehrman resurrects another superannuated commonplace to explain the present crisis: the celibacy of the priesthood. It hardly requires Mr. Lehrman's display of erudition to persuade a Catholic that not all priests have adhered to their vow of celibacy. From the indubitable fact that priests have the same instincts as everybody else, however, it does not follow that the solution to the present crisis is to abolish sacerdotal celibacy.

Mr. Lehrman is correct that celibacy became obligatory for priests only in 1075, but the pope responsible, the great reformer Gregory VII, did not pluck the idea out of the blue. In fact, the Catholic tradition of celibacy is much older, tracing back via early monasticism to the apostolic community described in the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul. Celibacy has been and no doubt always will be difficult and controversial, but the Church for a thousand years has had a settled doctrine on the subject with which the vast majority of clergy and laity are content.

Celibacy and its discontents cannot explain what Mr. Lehrman rightly identifies as the "horrendously new" extent of pederasty and homosexuality among priests. De-facto toleration of practicing homosexuals in some seminaries has gradually made it easier for pedophiles to be ordained and, even when detected, in effect to claim benefit of clergy. But Mr. Lehrman's solution is no solution. He thinks everything would be "much easier" for the Church if the "inborn sexual urges" of these priests "could be satisfied legitimately."

This cannot happen, because in the eyes of the Church pederasty and homosexuality are intrinsically sinful: these urges, whether inborn or acquired, cannot be satisfied "legitimately," least of all by a priest, but are to be resisted. Mr. Lehrman's solution, marriage, is the right answer to a different question: it is the proper vocation for those who cannot be celibate, not the solution to homosexuality or pedophilia in the priesthood—serious moral disorders which, as George Weigel points out, are or should be incompat-

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ible with the spiritual and practical functions of a Catholic priest.

In claiming that "the Church has remained essentially as doctrinaire in the post-World War II period as it was before," J. Efram Taub is not being as critical as he may think he is. If the Catholic Church were not doctrinaire, it would be neither Catholic nor a church. And if Mr. Taub and I agree on that, we also agree that, "though John Paul II may be more effective than his predecessors in battling the wider culture, he certainly did not initiate that fight."

Where we disagree, I suppose, is in our judgment of the Church's culpability in the Holocaust. As my discussion of Daniel Goldhagen's new book on that subject suggested, I am not persuaded that the conduct of the Vatican at the time can fairly be summarized as "silence," still less as active collaboration, or that its policy toward Jews and Judaism since 1945 (and especially under the present pope) deserves the opprobrium that Goldhagen and others have heaped upon it. That many leading Catholics, among them cardinals and popes, have indeed been guilty of "moral shortcomings," including anti-Semitism, is not in dispute. Whether the Church as an institution has been or remains guilty of "eliminationist anti-Semitism," as Goldhagen alleges, is another matter. I am not clear whether Mr. Taub fully endorses the Goldhagen thesis, which renders the Church directly comparable to Nazi Germany. If so, he and I must agree to disagree.

Mr. Taub also contends that Vatican II was "more a response to the aftermath of the Holocaust than a result of libertine tendencies." It was, in fact, a response to modernity, though not a capitulation to it. To describe the complex currents of thought and the Church politics that led to the summoning of the Council would take us too far afield, but it is worth pondering the fact that John Paul II's very first act after his election was to define his task as the implementation of Vatican II, an "event of the utmost importance in the almost 2,000 year history of the Church." Today, more than 25 years later, the pope still sees himself as the heir of the Council in which, as a young theologian, he had played a significant part.

However mixed is the manner in which Vatican II's legacy has been interpreted, it was the decisive moment when the Church confronted the modern world. Recasting Catholic doctrine and attitudes toward the Jewish people, especially the abrogation of the notion of collective guilt for the death of Jesus, was an essential part of this process. It culminated in 1986 when John Paul II set foot in the synagogue of Rome, to tell the Jews: "The Jewish religion is not 'extrinsic' to us, but in a certain sense is 'intrinsic' to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and . . . you are our elder brothers."

This solemn pronouncement by the supreme pontiff has inaugurated a new era in Christian-Jewish dialogue, in the fraternal investigation of the common biblical and moral inheritance shared by both religions. This has already gone far beyond overcoming the mutual suspicions of the past. It marks a turning point that critics like Goldhagen do not properly acknowledge.

Rev. Leonard F. Villa makes a fair point about the intense media scrutiny of the Church as a factor in exposing child abuse by the clergy. I am not sure, though, that this is an argument that an institution with the Church's universal mission is wise to make. In the eyes of the Church, child abuse by a priest is more heinous than abuse by anybody else, and the Church cannot complain if society in general takes the same view. If other religious and secular organizations may show a similar or worse pattern of abuse but are judged less harshly, that is the price the Church must pay for its exalted moral authority, an authority that enables it to demand attention on every issue of life and death. For the Church to be treated by the media like anybody else would mean forfeiting its unique status.

I am grateful to Eugene J. Fisher for his appreciative letter. He may be right that Catholics are not staying away from Mass because of the pedophilia scandal; I hope that he is. Nor am I competent, as an Englishman, to comment on the quality of leadership among the American hierarchy, among whom there are certainly many excellent bishops, no doubt including those he names. Am I mistaken, though, in wondering how Mr. Fisher's optimistic assessment of the American Church fits with his admission that the crisis is "arguably the greatest it has faced"?

Rev. Edward T. Oakes takes gentle issue on a number of points of fact. I did not say that Garry Wills was ordained, but that he was a "failed priest": a loose expression, admittedly, by which I intended only to imply that he studied for the priesthood for several years but without taking holy orders. I was of course aware that Pope John XXIII died in 1963 and that Vatican II lasted until 1965; this does not invalidate my point that he carried the Council with him on the issue of Catholic anti-Judaism. But I do apologize for misspelling Cardinal Gröer's name and for erroneously elevating John Cornwall, the author of *Hitler's Pope*, to the priesthood.

For the rest, I am flattered by Rev. Oakes's generosity, and freely concede that I may be too pessimistic about the impact of the scandal on vocations for the priesthood. Whether John Paul II can or should "play King Canute" against resurgent Islam or Enron-style bishops, I do not know. But I would remind Rev. Oakes that Canute commanded the waves to obey him not because he thought they would, but to prove to his courtiers that even he was not omnipotent.

William A. Donohue is no less kind to me—and, if severe in his judgment of Garry Wills, not unjust. I am not sure he is quite fair to attribute self-aggrandizing motives to Daniel Goldhagen, who is nothing if not sincere. I am sure, however, that few Jews would either want or expect "to have a full voice" at a Third Vatican Council, any more than Catholics would expect to be included in a rabbinical court. Mr. Donohue is right

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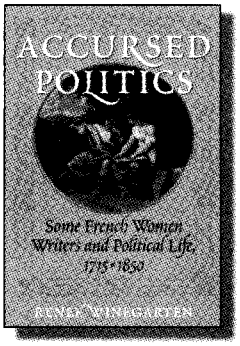

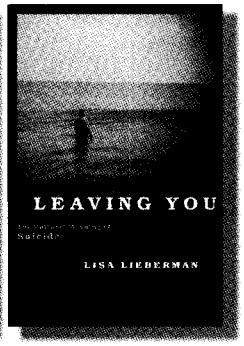

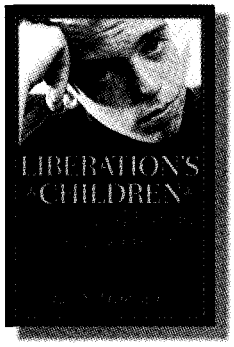

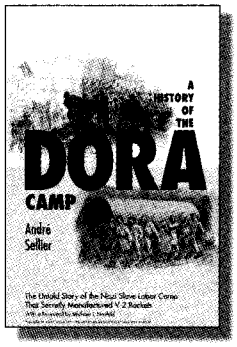

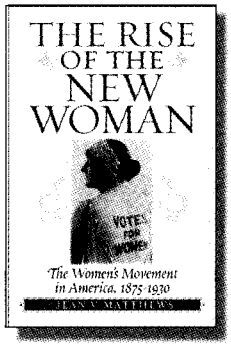

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that the Church's future depends in large part on the outcome of the struggle now being waged between Wills Catholics and Weigel Catholics. The best hope for the Church is that it can still produce thinkers of the caliber of George Weigel. The greatest danger is that it will fail to listen to them.

Beyond the Intifada

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes argues that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will come about only when the Palestinians, having been beaten to a pulp, finally surrender to whatever it is that Israel is willing to give them ["Does Israel Need a Plan?," February]. This is the sort of cut-off-your-nose-to-spite-your-face logic that is guaranteed to keep the issue churning well into the new millennium. It represents little more than a banal embrace of the morality of power.

To be truly pro-Israel is to come to terms with Zionism's embedded antagonism toward the "native population" and the century-old scheming to pry the natives from their land and otherwise disenfranchise them of their basic civil rights. To be truly pro-Israel is to help the country evolve toward inclusiveness, not only for the latest Ethiopian or Russian Jewish immigrant but for the Palestinian refugee or resident of Ramallah or Nablus.

To be *anti*-Israel, just heed Daniel Pipes: root for Jewish dominion and the defeat of the Palestinians.

ALAN GOLDSTEIN
Plainfield, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes manages to criticize everyone attempting to find a way out of the current Israeli-Palestinian crisis, whether it is President Bush or his far-Left critics. Yet his description of the Bush administration's "road map" is fundamentally unfair.

Each successive draft of that document has been more sympathetic to Israel's approach and more consistent with the position of Prime Minister Sharon. Mr. Pipes ignores the fact that the road map is performance-based, providing at every juncture a test of Palestinian reform and commitment to ending violence. The other members of the Middle East "quartet"—Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations—might be better targets of his critique; the Bush administration has been careful to protect Israel from any egregious pressures.

Mr. Pipes describes the Israel Policy Forum (IPF), with which I am associated, as "impatient for the road map to progress," implying a strategy of appeasement and a rush to recommend Israeli compromises. The IPF offered an "on-ramp" to the road map as a suggestion for simplifying the document. Our approach rested on the assumption that an end to violence could be facilitated by American-led international monitors who would verify compliance with security reforms (a mechanism that Mr. Pipes derides as "plainly unworkable"). The monitors would remain "referees," observers who would not physically intervene to stop violence, lest they themselves become targets of Palestinian ire. In any case, the monitors constitute just one suggestion in a plan centrally targeting the issue of violence.

We are therefore mystified as to why Mr. Pipes writes that the on-ramp imposes no limits on the Palestinians and releases them from accountability. In our proposal, *if there is no end to violence, nothing moves ahead.* If violence resumes, other concessions promptly cease and the process is reversed. Our approach, if implemented, would save Jewish lives, stem Israel's economic crisis, and begin to enhance Israel's short- and long-term security. In such an altered environment, significant players on the Palestinian side who accept Israel's right to exist would be able to gain stature and influence.

Daniel Pipes offers nothing but continued conflict, and supplies no mechanism for testing Palestinian reform. We offer concrete steps that would force the Palestinians to end the violence and subsequently ease the plight of victims on both sides, without dooming Israel to endless bloodshed.

STEVEN SPIEGEL
University of California
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes speculates that if the Palestinians themselves were finally "convinced that they have lost," Israel's Arab neighbors would "find it difficult to remain rejectionist" toward the Jewish state. But he does not explain why this should be so.

More than a century has elapsed since the beginning of modern Jewish migration to Palestine. At no time in this period have Jews been seriously threatened by the violence practiced against them by indigenous Arabs. Rather, it has been the combined military might of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, et al. that has threatened Israel's very existence and has caused thousands of Jewish deaths.

The belligerence of the Arab states was never motivated by the goal of fighting "for" the Palestinians, as Mr. Pipes suggests. They have always fought for what they consider their own geopolitical interests.

BENJAMIN D. SHERMAN
Saddle Brook, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes is absolutely correct that the Palestinians and their Arab brethren have yet to come to terms with Israel's existence, that they have drenched themselves in anti-Semitism and poisoned the minds of their youth, and that unless and until they dispel the illusion of thinking they can destroy Israel there cannot be a true peace. This is fine as far as it goes. But Mr. Pipes cannot predict how long it will take for the Arabs to shed their hatred. It could take 50 or even 100 years.

Under such a scenario, Mr. Pipes's prescription fails to address the demographic realities that pose a parlous threat to Israel. According to Arnon Sofer of Haifa University, Jews will constitute just over 40 percent of the population living west of the Jordan River by 2020. By that time, Sofer estimates, there will be 15.2 million people living in the area: 6.4 million Jews and 3 million Arabs and other non-Jews within the pre-1967 borders of Israel and 5.8 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

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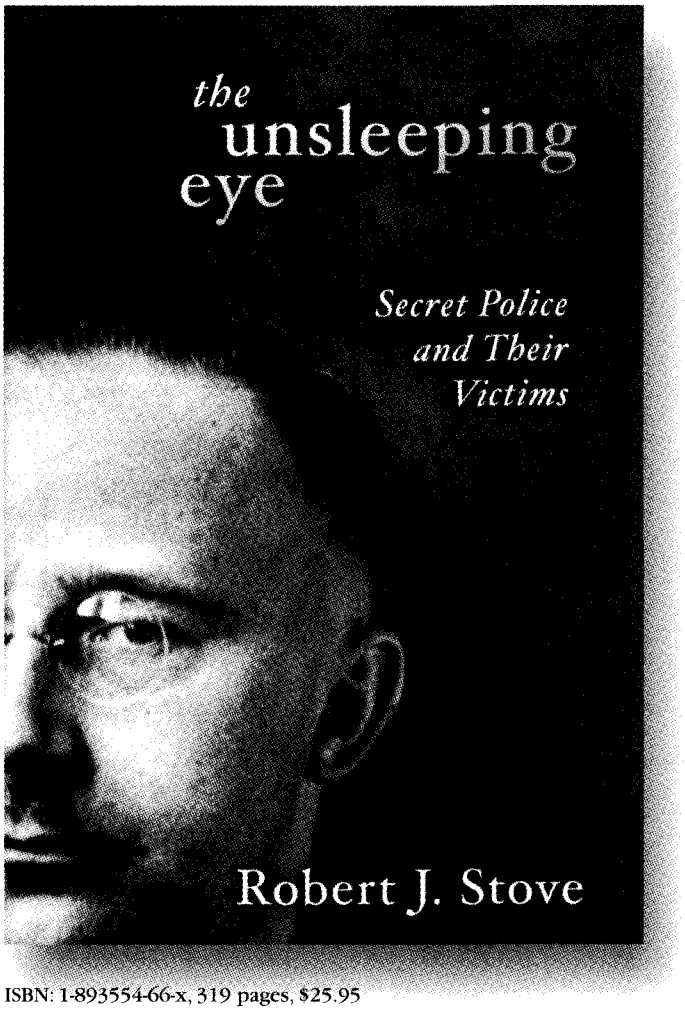

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These facts have not escaped the attention of the Arabs. As a writer for the London-based daily *Al-Hayat* observed:

> We are capable of increasing the demographic threat against Israel, if we demonstrate the necessary determination. It is high time for long-term planning of the management of the Arab-Israeli crisis, whose life is still long. We must give the 1948 Palestinians the status they deserve, because without them, we cannot make Palestine again Arab.

This hardly sounds like an adversary even remotely contemplating coming to terms with "a sovereign Jewish presence between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea," let alone one that is likely to be "convinced that they have lost"—conditions that Mr. Pipes suggests as prerequisites for peace.

Mr. Pipes rules out the obvious answer of the "forceful removal of Palestinian Arabs from Israeli-controlled territories." As he writes, the "political price, both abroad and within Israel, would be incalculable, rendering this option more fantastical than real." But simply waiting the Palestinian Arabs out, as Mr. Pipes proposes, is problematic, too. That is why Israel in general, but particularly its political center/Right, has no choice but to formulate a plan that does not depend on the Arabs' benign acceptance of the Jewish state.

The Israeli Left and its American Jewish counterparts simply call for unilateral withdrawal to the pre-1967 dividing lines, ignoring the dangers inherent in what Abba Eban famously called "Auschwitz borders." In this they have the support of the European Union, Russia, and other members of the United Nations as formulated in the so-called road map for the creation of a Palestinian state. Of greater significance is the American commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state originally made by President Clinton and now cemented by the Bush administration.

Under these circumstances, it seems to me that Israel must put forward criteria for borders and population dispositions that will satisfy its security needs and national-religious historical rights. These criteria would have to include some kind of mutual population exchange between Palestinians and Israelis living in the disputed territories, so that Israel could widen its narrow eight-mile waist to perhaps twenty miles. Israel would also need to maintain sovereign control over areas of contiguity between a new Palestinian entity and neighboring Arab states.

This will entail not only yielding dozens of Jewish communities in the West Bank and Gaza but also relocating Palestinians eastward from such towns as Tulkarm and Qalqilya and northward from the Rafah refugee camp bordering Egypt. The new borders would also have to ensure Israel's sovereignty over major Jewish holy sites, including the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb. Finally, any new Palestinian entity would have to be demilitarized and barred from forming any military alliances with Arab states.

To stonewall, as Mr. Pipes seems to suggest, ignores the lethality of a Palestinian population that is both hostile and growing inexorably.

DAVID SCHIMEL
Great Neck, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes's article is brilliant, yet it suffers from his refusal to follow the logical consequences of his own argument. Mr. Pipes maintains that the great conflicts of the 20th century were resolved either by the unequivocal defeat of one side or not at all. "[T]he wars between North and South Korea, Pakistan and India, Iraq and Iran, and Iraq and Kuwait have not ended," he writes, "for the losing side has interpreted every defeat as but partial and temporary."

It follows from this that Israel must militarily crush the Palestinians. His schema permits of no other option. But Mr. Pipes draws a conclusion at odds with his analysis. "What will help bring about this Palestinian change of heart," he writes, "is Israeli deterrence: maintaining a powerful military and threatening credibly to use force when aggressed upon." Mr. Pipes claims that deterrence "worked" from 1948 to 1993, ignoring the fact that the same genocidal hopes that are today held by the Palestinians were then harbored by Israel's Arab neighbors, who made war upon it in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973.

NICHOLAS STIX
Belle Harbor, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes rightly demolishes many of the favored but flawed solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, but his own recipe for peace relies on the false premise that Israeli "deterrence" worked in the period 1948-93. By any usual meaning of the concept, it did not.

When Israel decisively defeated its enemies, as in 1948 and 1967, the result was almost immediate border and guerrilla warfare, followed by all-out fighting within six or seven years. Israel's more equivocal victories in 1956, 1973, and 1982 actually yielded somewhat more peaceful and longer interludes before the resumption of open conflict. It is not clear that conventional victories have much deterred the Arabs. It is equally unlikely that defeating the Palestinians in the current war, even coupled with more accommodating American policies, will greatly reverse the trend.

The Arabs recognize Israel's fundamental strategic weaknesses in population, land area, natural resources, unreliable allies, and (in the Arab view) staying power. This undermines Israel's strategic deterrent regardless of tactical success. There are only two means of redressing this imbalance, both problematic.

One would be a full-fledged alliance with the U.S., to include the basing of naval, ground, and air forces in Israel (but *not*, as Thomas Friedman has proposed, the active policing of Israel's borders or disengagement lines with the Palestinians). The problems with this arrangement are that the U.S. would be reluctant to accept it, it would undermine Israel's self-reliance, and it would potentially obligate Israel to help carry America's water in other venues—say, Korea.

Another alternative would be for Israel to end its am-

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What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millenium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements". When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews) – the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees". In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees – by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million(!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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biguous nuclear policy. Becoming a declared nuclear power would probably bring international condemnation, calls for sanctions, and a regional arms race. Arguably, however, Israel faces these problems anyway. To succeed, Israel would have to ensure that its nuclear forces are invulnerable to a first strike and that they are overwhelmingly superior. Though this solution to Israel's strategic dilemma is not as desirable as an American alliance, it can be implemented by Israel unilaterally.

JONATHAN F. KEILER
Bowie, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

As Daniel Pipes argues, the Palestinians' dream of replacing Israel has driven their violent behavior from the beginning, and will do so for as long as they harbor the belief that terrorism can break Israel's will to survive. To achieve a Palestinian "change of heart," Mr. Pipes's chief prescription for Israel is a steadfast and "credible" policy of deterrence.

But reasonable as this sounds, it is by itself not strong enough to effect the desired transformation. The credibility of deterrence is in the mind of the beholder. As Mr. Pipes observes, a war-weary and peace-loving Israel fell for the Oslo deception, abandoned southern Lebanon to Hizbullah, made an astonishingly generous peace offer at Taba, and has often lapsed from its retaliatory policy. Why would the Palestinians not cling to the idea that Israel's recent tactical successes will yet prove ephemeral, especially now that the international "quartet" may again be riding to their political rescue? Deterrence presents a would-be assailant with prospective costs and benefits. But if Palestine in place of Israel is the prize, and if that prize appears reachable, what costs would be too great?

From now on, then, Israel must embrace not passive deterrence but active defense. The eminent military thinker Carl von Clausewitz saw clearly that the ultimate object in war—the subduing of the enemy's bellicose will—requires altering his expectations by placing what he covets beyond reach. To this end, Clausewitz prescribed a necessary condition: first destroy his military power, upon which his bellicose hopes depend. This is precisely the policy Israel is now implementing in rooting out the terrorist command structures and armories that receive sanctuary in the territories.

MICHAEL BALCH
Iowa City, Iowa

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes is right to see a definitive Israeli victory over the Palestinians as a necessary condition for a genuine peace in the Middle East. But I am afraid it is not a sufficient condition. As Edward Luttwak has written of the current international order, "'Peacekeeping institutions' commonly perpetuate war by freezing the processes that would exhaust it." Even if the U.S. and Israel did everything Daniel Pipes advocates, there are still the European Union, the Arab League, and the United Nations to support the Palestinians and prevent them from accepting defeat.

ANTOINE CHICHE
Paris, France

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes's thesis is that the Palestinians must experience a "change of heart" before any peaceful resolution of the conflict can make headway. This is what the vast majority of Israelis are also waiting for.

But some serious obstacles stand in the way. The impoverished, powerless, and voiceless Palestinians will never be able to take a stand against the monolithic enmity toward Israel of the Arab world, equipped as these enemies are with unlimited petrodollars, control of the mass media, and cadres of organizers, recruiters, and leaders already deployed among the Palestinians. Even without the overwhelming fact of Arab hatred, the leaders of groups like Hizbullah and Islamic Jihad are never going to have a change of heart, no matter how ground down the Palestinians may come to feel.

Even if we assume that there is some level of suffering at which the Palestinians would say "enough," does Israel have the political will to inflict the level of damage that would be required to achieve this end? I do not believe so, especially as long as Palestinian attacks do not take the form of invading tank columns, flights of bombers, and waves of infantry.

I admire Mr. Pipes's relentless pursuit of clarity about Israel's painful dilemma, but a valid analysis begins with accepting the hard truth that the Arab and Palestinian jihad against Israel is an unchangeable fact of life in the Middle East. Israel must figure out how to survive in the face of it.

ALAN RAUZIN
Miami Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes provides a masterful critique of the many plans and road maps that are being prepared to end the Palestinian war against Israel. He rightly calls for "inducing the Palestinians to surrender their murderous intentions vis-à-vis Israel." But what exactly should this entail?

The Palestinian Authority has turned thousands of its youth into weapons of mass destruction by poisoning their minds with virulent hatred of Jews and of Israel. What is needed is a massive program of de-jihadization, like the de-Nazification program after World War II. School books must be cleansed, summer camps must be used exclusively for sports and recreation, the media must return to reporting, and the mosques must eschew their venomous preaching. Only after these tasks have been completed can Israel feel that peace in any meaningful sense is possible.

HARVEY LITHWICK
Metar, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes's analysis of Israel's current situation is apt, but his solution does not go far enough. The Palestinians have *already* been militarily defeated, in fact more than once since 1948.

When the Soviet Union existed to prop them up, Israel was always prevented from exercising the full powers of the victor and could not mold Palestinian society to democratic norms. But now, with no great power behind its vanquished foe, Israel should treat the Palestinians as the United States treated Germany and

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Japan after World War II. It must force the Palestinians to convene a constituent assembly, adopt a democratic constitution, and hold full, fair, and free elections. It then ought to be the guarantor of that constitution, much as the United States is the ultimate guarantor of German and Japanese democracy even today.

Whom the Palestinians then elect is their own business. It will not really matter. Such a leader will be constrained by the rules of the democratic game. This can be seen in a place like Turkey, where democratic elections produced an ostensibly Islamic government, but one that remains generally cooperative and friendly to both the United States and Israel.

ERVIN SCHLEIFER
Hartsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes is correct in his basic thesis, but he fails to mention another approach worth considering to foster peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Both Jordan and Egypt appear to be playing a constructive role in trying to damp down violence against Israel. To arrive at a temporary solution, I suggest that the U.S. and the UN ask Jordan and Egypt to assume joint trusteeship of the West Bank and Gaza for a period not to exceed twenty years. Israel would continue to have responsibility for the Jews in these areas and the land they occupy.

Neither Egypt nor Jordan will want to assume this responsibility. But with encouragement from the U.S., they may reluctantly agree. This will demonstrate unequivocally to the Arabs living on the West Bank and Gaza that Israel is here to stay and must be accepted, while also allowing them to live under Arab rule.

ALBERT H. SOLOWAY
Columbus, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Pipes is one of the wisest analysts of the Middle East, but he is too quick to dismiss the possibility of "redirect[ing] Palestinian aspirations toward Jordan, a country that already has a Palestinian majority." The notion of "Jordan-is-Palestine is a nonstarter for many reasons," he writes, "of which the single most important is that neither the Jordanians nor the Palestinians show the slightest readiness to go along with it."

Yes, neither Arafat nor his successor should rule Jordan. But why not let Jordan and Israel—the states created from the Palestine Mandate—form a confederation, with the Palestinian Arabs living in the West Bank and Gaza remaining or becoming citizens of Jordan, but with autonomy, including voting in local elections? This cannot be done at present, but it should be negotiated as soon as the Arab states and the Palestinians demonstrate that they can live in peace with Israel.

EDWARD M. SIEGEL
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

We are once again indebted to Daniel Pipes for illuminating some painful truths. His reminder that the great conflicts of the 20th century "ended because one side wholly abandoned its war aims" is important and timely. It is baffling to me why Europeans, who have stoically accepted the rearrangement of their own borders and the transfer of their own populations, nevertheless support Palestinian efforts to return to some pre-1947 status quo.

Mr. Pipes is also on target in calling for an end to "the cruel charade" of U.S. support for maintaining the refugee status of the Palestinians, and in urging Washington finally to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. President Bush should go further by making it clear that the U.S. has serious reservations about supporting statehood if the Palestinians prove unwilling or unable to curb terrorism. This has been implicit in U.S. policy; it is time for it to be explicit.

AMBASSADOR
DONALD BLINKEN
New York City

DANIEL PIPES writes:

With the exception of Donald Blinken's endorsement of my ideas (for which I thank him), my respondents broadly divide in two: one group (Alan Goldstein, Steven Spiegel, Benjamin D. Sherman) takes issue with my thesis, and the other (David Schimel, Nicholas Stix, Jonathan F. Keiler, Michael Balch, Antoine Chiche, Alan Rauzin, Harvey Lithwick, Ervin Schleifer, Albert H. Soloway, Edward M. Siegel) takes issue with my policy recommendations. The former critics think I go too far; the latter generally find I go not far enough. Interestingly, the latter outnumber the former ten to three—an indication of how sentiments are moving in circles sympathetic to Israel. My replies will necessarily be very brief.

Alan Goldstein calls for "inclusiveness" for Palestinians in Israel. This sounds to me like a codeword for dismantling the Jewish state and replacing it with a binational Jewish-Muslim state. He is, in short, prescribing the end of Zionism.

Steven Spiegel emphasizes that the Israel Policy Forum's "on-ramp" proposal is strictly conditional: "if there is no end to violence, nothing moves ahead." Fine. But exactly the same sort of conditionality was supposed to be a premise of the entire Oslo process, and it never worked. Palestinian noncompliance sometimes delayed the forward momentum, but not once did it stop it. The record shows that such conditions are merely rhetorical.

Benjamin D. Sherman argues that Arab states have interests of their own, distinct from those of the Palestinians. Yes, but note the major change over the decades: before 1967, states in general wanted conflict with Israel; since then, they have wanted out. Once the Palestinians forgo rejectionism, I expect states will do likewise. Indeed, we saw something along these lines in the mid-1990's.

David Schimel is right about the demographic realities, but I stand by my assessment of transfer—that "the political price, both abroad and within Israel, would be incalculable, rendering this option more fantastical than real." Transfer is growing in popularity, as shown by the survey data I cite in my article, but its costs—outraging so many Israelis, Americans, and others—mean it will undermine rather than enhance Israel's security. As for Mr. Schimel's specific plan for a "mutual population ex-

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change" between Palestinians and Israelis living in the disputed territories, I can only reiterate what I wrote in my article: "it is a mistake to discuss 'final-status' issues—i.e., how things will look when the conflict is over"—until the Palestinians have definitively accepted Israel's existence.

Nicholas Stix states that "Israel must militarily crush the Palestinians." Maybe, maybe not. My article recommended only the broad lines of an American approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict (i.e., to seek a Palestinian change of heart) and intentionally steered clear of advising the Israeli government how to achieve that goal.

Jonathan F. Keiler finds me mistaken in asserting that Israeli deterrence worked during the years 1948-93. It did work to the extent that Israel was seen by its enemies very differently at the beginning and end of that period. In 1948, the Arabs assumed they could snuff out the nascent state; by 1993, they despaired of achieving this goal. That said, Mr. Keiler is correct that deterrence was not a complete success; rejectionism remained sufficiently alive in 1993 that the Oslo process could revive it.

Michael Balch and I quite agree that the Sharon government is following a correct policy. More broadly, we also agree that Washington should endorse an active policy of deterrence by Israel to encourage the Palestinians to experience a change of heart, and not just passively wait for this to happen.

While in accord with Antoine Chiche about the potential mischief of "peacekeeping institutions," I fail to understand his point; when Palestinians give up their intent to destroy Israel, those institutions can do only limited damage.

Alan Rauzin counsels despair: "Arab and Palestinian jihad against Israel is an unchangeable fact of life." But never say never; everything in politics changes over time. To extrapolate from the present into the infinite future is a mistake.

I endorse Harvey Lithwick's proposed "de-jihadization," though by definition it must follow, not precede, a change of heart.

Ervin Schleifer proposes good governance, a plan my article addressed and dismissed. While "certainly welcome in principle," I wrote, "it is less than desirable so long as the Palestinians continue to seek Israel's destruction."

Albert H. Soloway advocates a reversion to the pre-1967 conditions ("Jordan and Egypt to assume joint trusteeship of the West Bank and Gaza"); Edward M. Siegel calls for a Jordanian-Israeli confederation. Both strike me as simultaneously implausible and insufficiently ambitious. Palestinian nationalism cannot be put back into Jordanian and Egyptian bottles, and neither plan addresses Palestinian rejectionism.

Jewish History

TO THE EDITOR:

David G. Roskies is entitled to his highly traditional view of what constitutes historical writing, but that is no warrant for misrepresenting what is actually said in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* [Books in Review, February]. That work does, indeed, assume that Jewish cultures throughout the ages have been formed in interaction with the surrounding non-Jewish cultures, a "subversive" idea that I first heard brilliantly articulated decades ago by Gerson D. Cohen, then the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. But contrary to Mr. Roskies, this cultural interaction did not simply mean the passive absorption of the culture of the "Other" in the "construction of identity," two phrases, by the way, that never appear in my preface. Instead, I argue (as do many of the contributors) that this was a process of both adaptation *and* resistance.

Moreover, in a section of my preface that Mr. Roskies fails to mention, I say that focusing on cultural interaction alone "would be missing a crucial aspect of Jewish culture: the continuity of both textual and folk traditions throughout Jewish history." This "extraordinary library," I argue, provided important commonalities between Jewish cultures on both the elite and popular levels. The creative interplay between these unifying traditions and diverse local customs (which often developed in interaction with their surroundings) constitutes the complexity of Jewish culture.

But complexity is the last thing on Mr. Roskies's agenda. So is accuracy. Thus he writes that Eric M. Meyers explains "everything associated with the talmudic rabbis . . . in reference to the Jewish interaction with Hellenism." Meyers certainly holds (as did Saul Lieberman) that Hellenism was central "as both a challenge and inspiration" to the formation of this Jewish culture. But he also says that these Jews "were equally preoccupied with maintaining firmly the boundaries between their own identity and religion and that of their non-Jewish neighbors."

Isaiah Gafni does indeed—as Mr. Roskies reports—discuss the common folk culture shared by Zoroastrians and Jews, which includes the famous incantation bowls. But his primary theme is how the rabbis established their culture as "at home" in Babylonia. In contrast to Hellenistic Judaism in Egypt, he argues, "this sort of 'belonging' does not require an accommodation with the surrounding culture or a meaningful social interaction."

Mr. Roskies has even managed to misread Raymond P. Scheindlin, whose chapter is the only one he applauds. Far from describing "a Jewish culture notable for its spiritual autonomy," Scheindlin demonstrates how the work of a great writer like Saadiah Gaon required deep immersion in the Arabic culture of the day. How can one trust a reviewer's judgment after such misreadings?

To one of Mr. Roskies's charges, though, *Cultures of the Jews* proudly pleads guilty; this is not exclusively a history of "great men, great texts, and great ideas," but also of women, material culture, folklore, and popular practices. There is virtually no one working in the historical profession today who would find such an approach remarkable or objectionable, and it is high time that a collaborative

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history of the Jews include such dimensions. Mr. Roskies may sneer at amulets, but, as the great historian of kabbalah Gershom Scholem taught us, Jewish creativity knows many forms. Although Mr. Roskies may pine for the "great ages and ideas of Jewish history," the real vitality of the Jews—and thus their hopes for the future—encompasses much more than is contained in his philosophy.

DAVID BIALE
University of California
Davis, California

TO THE EDITOR:

David G. Roskies criticizes my contribution to *Cultures of the Jews*, a chapter called "American Jewish Culture in the 20th Century," by remarking that "synagogues are deemed important insofar as one of them was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright." This is not a fair characterization. I devote a page and a half to synagogue architecture, and I mention a dozen other buildings, designed by Jews and non-Jews.

Mr. Roskies also claims that in my chapter, American Yiddish culture "is dismissed in a paragraph or two." I count seven paragraphs, and if by "dismissed" he means "inadequately discussed," this is true of virtually any subject in a synoptic essay like my own. But if Mr. Roskies means "rejected" or "repudiated," I defy him to find any hint of disparagement of Yiddish culture in my piece. On the contrary, I write:

> Without a hermetic language, a threat to Jewish distinctiveness is posed, and a definable sensibility, anchored in idiom, runs the risk of disappearance. To command one's own language does not guarantee continuity and creativity, but it does at least communicate the sense of a peculiar destiny.

Though this view can be contested, it is hardly dismissive.

STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

What a bizarre review David G. Roskies has written of David Biale's *Cultures of the Jews*! Biale sets out to acquaint his readers with the beautiful variety of Jewish life through the ages and across the globe. Mr. Roskies, however, seems to prefer that the public not be exposed to these delights, instead maintaining the monolithic view that Jewish culture has remained unchanged since Rabbi Judah the Prince, if not since Moses. If Mr. Roskies wishes to see another monumental Jewish history in the fashion of Louis Finkelstein and H.H. Ben-Sasson, well, let him write it himself. In the meantime, Biale has chosen an entirely different set of topics and addresses them well.

DWIGHT FREUND
California State University
Sacramento, California

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

Let me not waste this reply on I said/you said (the "construction of identity" phrase appears on p. xxi of Mr. Biale's preface), or catch my critics doing precisely what they accuse me of (the "everything associated with the talmudic rabbis" refers to a specific list of examples adduced by Eric M. Myers), and cut to the chase. In my review, I was hardly championing a monolithic view that Jewish culture remained unchanged since . . . Moses." Rather, I was heeding the warning with which Gerson D. Cohen concluded his memorable address to a group of educators on "The Blessings of Assimilation in Jewish History." There, as early as 1966, Cohen presciently warned of "a world in which well-intentioned people are bent on reducing tensions and differences" lest they be accused of fomenting "cultural competition."

"Cultural competition" was Cohen's gloss on a Hebrew phrase, *hikkuy shel hitharut* (more literally, "competitive emulation"), a key concept in the thought of the Zionist theoretician Ahad Ha'am (who is accorded but a few lines in Mr. Biale's volume). Though Mr. Biale now claims Cohen as an early source of inspiration, he has advanced the very agenda that Cohen feared, one which might best be described as the cultural subordination of the Jews. With the help of 22 other scholars, he has charted the successive waves of conquests—Canaanite, Assyrian, Hellenistic, Babylonian, Islamic, Christian, Ottoman, Russian, Austro-Hungarian (but not, for some reason, Soviet and Nazi)—under which the Jews have fashioned their manifold "cultures." Then, by celebrating anonymous men and industrious women engaged in border crossings, religious syncretism, the visual arts, and the demands of the body, Mr. Biale's counterhistory presents the Jews as merely reactive to those conquests, learning over and over again how to roll with the punches. By equating "textual and folk traditions," a PC formulation if there ever was one; by giving short shrift to Jewish law, ethics, communal organization, classical education (the only educational system described at any length, in four different essays, is the Francophone, neocolonial Alliance Israélite Universelle), Mr. Biale's volume offers no credible model of how Jews and Judaism managed to stay competitive—not triumphant, not morally superior, just plain competitive—on a global playing field.

What, then, is the alternative to Mr. Biale's transhistorical map of cultural subordination? Raymond P. Scheindlin's chapter on "Judeo-Arabic Culture in the Golden Age of Islam" is not only a model of the mental curriculum that Gerson Cohen demanded from the student of the Jewish past (which includes, in this case, an intimate knowledge of the Arabic and Islamic side of the ledger); not only demonstrates in luxurious detail how Jewish "merchants, intellectuals, rabbis, and poets" reinvented Judaism and Jewish culture, but also shows how all of this individual achievement contributed mightily to what can only be called the spiritual autonomy of the Jews. How else to characterize the political authority of the Gaon, the courts of Jewish law, the institutions of elementary and higher learning, the network of synagogues, the salons of Hebrew poets and grammarians, and the economic independence of Jewish merchants, if not in such terms? And how else does spiritual autonomy work if not by means of policing and, when neces-

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sary, closing one's borders?

Cultural competition extends even to the highly porous—I would even say, promiscuous—field of folklore and folk traditions. Take, for example, the ethnographic work of S. Ansky, whom Mr. Biale has chosen to serve as his guide through the highways and byways of East European Jewish culture. The first half of Ansky's landmark essay on "Mutual Cultural Influences" in Jewish folklore was devoted to the many instances of borrowings by shtetl Jews from their Belorussian, Polish, and Ukrainian neighbors. In the second half of the essay, Ansky detailed the profound impact that shtetl culture had *upon* peasant practices and beliefs. Finally, and at precisely the moment when the old system of values was breaking down, such writers as Sholem Aleichem, I.L. Peretz, S.Y. Agnon, and Ansky himself transmuted arcane and rapidly disappearing folk traditions into great works of literary art, which in turn became, for millions of Jews, a powerful new source of spiritual autonomy. How little of this cultural dialectic is conveyed in *Cultures of the Jews*!

My quarrel with Stephen J. Whitfield is not over the number of paragraphs he does or does not allocate to the flowering of Yiddish culture in America. My real argument flows from the title of his essay, "Declarations of Independence: American Jewish Culture in the 20th Century." In the essay itself, only those Jews who broke into the American mainstream, like Irving Berlin and Jerry Siegel (the creator of Superman), are credited with having signed on to this "declaration," whereas the trajectory of Yiddish culture is described as a retreat from the mainstream, if not a debacle. Mr. Whitfield's prooftext is Jacob Glatstein's 1938 valedictory poem, "Good Night, World."

But this poem, read within the context of world Jewish culture, and beyond the borders of Broadway and Hollywood, represents one of the boldest declarations of Jewish independence ever penned. If Mr. Whitfield cannot see this, it may be because, like Mr. Biale, he denies to Jewish culture the right to self-generate, to repudiate the embrace of everything Other, to interrogate the blessings of an open society, to expose the manifold acts of bad faith of which every Jew may be guilty, beginning with the arch-modernist Glatstein himself. Modernity, for the Jews, is a two-way street; and fidelity to Judaism, Glatstein realized in the eleventh hour, might well entail returning "with head erect,/and at my sole command . . . back into the ghetto."

Mr. Biale concludes his 1,150-page volume by comparing the "collective biography" supplied by the Hebrew Bible with his own group "journey through three millennia of Jewish culture." In a bold but sophomoric homiletical leap, he argues that "the cacophony of voices preserved in the Bible . . . most resembles the state of Jewish culture today." Leaving aside the fact that Moses the lawgiver, the Priestly Code, the Mosaic curses, and many other voices have been expunged from Mr. Biale's choir, I invite enthusiasts like Dwight Freund to reread these concluding pages of *Cultures of the Jews* and then decide which of us is presenting a monolithic view of a culture "unchanged since Moses."

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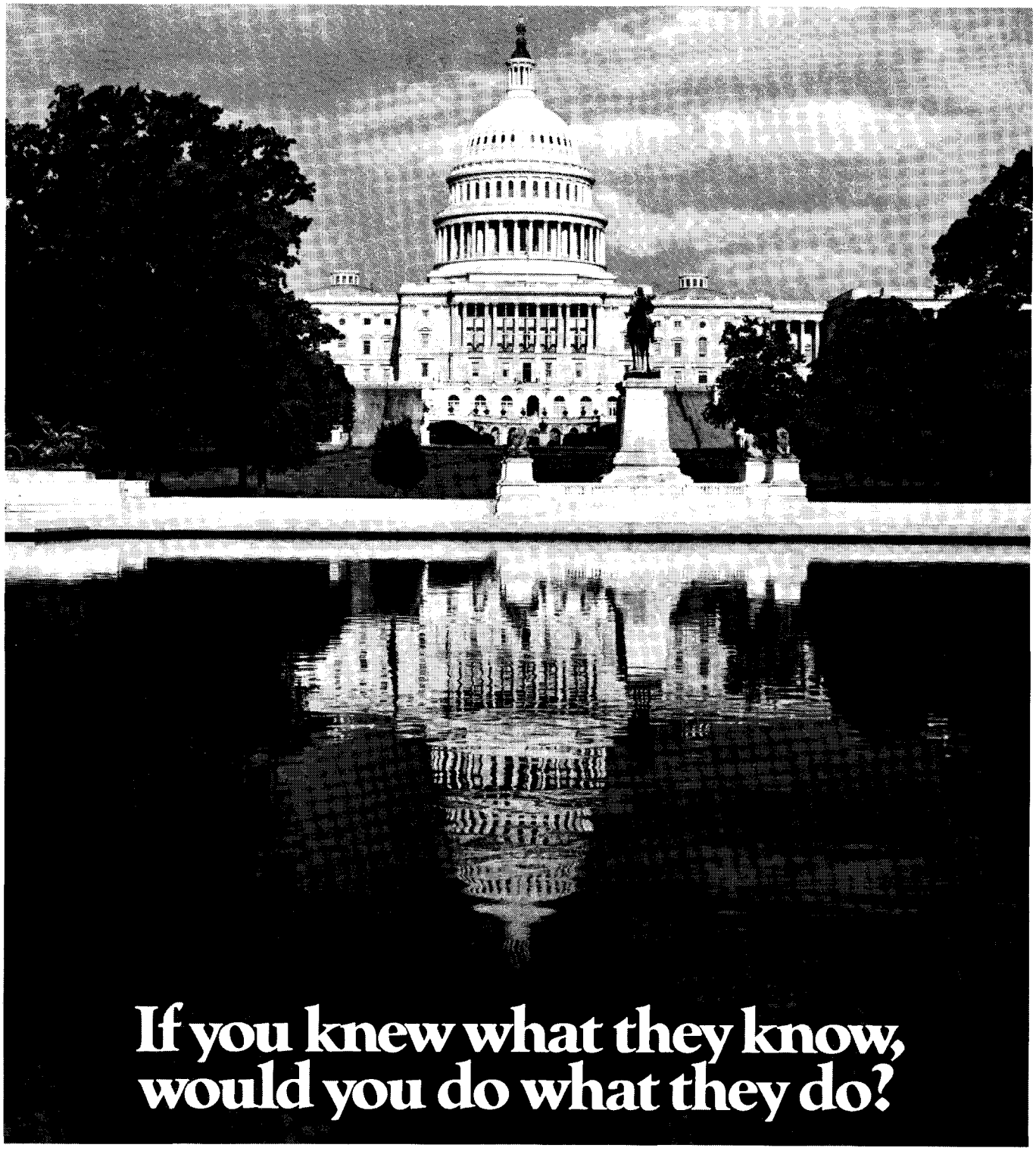

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Commentary
May 2003

The U.S. and Israel: The Road Ahead

Abraham D. Sofaer

IMMEDIATELY AFTER the 1991 Gulf war, the first Bush administration convened in Madrid an international conference on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. This was an event that political leaders all over the world had been pursuing as if it were the holy grail of international diplomacy. It set in motion a decade of "peacemaking" that included the treaty between Israel and Jordan but whose most visible fruit was the Oslo accords of 1993.

In recent months, three years into the bloody Palestinian assault on Israel that the Oslo peace process became, the same dynamic has once again been in play, as international diplomats and government officials have scrambled to take advantage of the anticipated defeat of Saddam Hussein by pushing forward their preferred solutions. President Bush himself predicted in late February that "success in Iraq could . . . begin a new stage of Middle Eastern peace," while England and other European nations, keen to demonstrate their good faith to the Arab world, have gone much farther. In the very first week of the war, the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, complaining about an alleged double standard when it came to "injustice against the Palestinians," equated UN resolutions concerning Saddam Hussein's threats to international peace with those condemning Israel on a range of less significant matters.

A more evenhanded view underlies the latest diplomatic initiative to address the Israel-Palestinian dispute. This is the famous "road map" prepared by the "quartet" of the United States, the European Union (EU), the UN, and Russia. The road map proposes a two-state solution to the conflict, to be reached in three phases.

In phase I, the Palestinians are to "declare" an end to violence and terrorism; undertake "visible" efforts to prevent attacks on Israelis; consolidate all security forces under an "empowered" interior minister; and restructure Palestinian institutions through numerous, detailed measures. Israel, for its part, is to call for an end to violence against Palestinians; cooperate in rebuilding a viable Palestinian security force; cease all actions "undermining trust," including deportations, demolition of homes, and destruction of Palestinian infrastructure; take measures to improve the humanitarian situation; and "immediately" dismantle "settlement outposts erected since March 2001" and freeze all other settlement activity, including "natural growth."

All this is to happen by June of this calendar year—next month, in effect. Then comes phase II, which foresees the "option" of creating a Palestinian state, with provisional borders, attributes of sovereignty, and maximum territorial continuity;

ABRAHAM D. SOFAER, *a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, served as legal adviser to the Department of State from 1985 to 1990, and was the principal negotiator of the 1989 accord that returned to Egypt the Israeli-held area of Taba in the Sinai peninsula.*

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the completion date for this phase is the end of the current calendar year. Phase III, which is to result in a final agreement between the parties settling all outstanding issues, is to be completed by the end of 2005.

The road map was given a major boost on March 14 when President Bush affirmed his support for it and promised to publish it as soon as the Palestinians appointed a new prime minister with "real authority." British Prime Minister Tony Blair promptly signaled his readiness to put pressure on Israel to move the process forward whether Palestinian violence ceases or not. Meanwhile, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) have claimed to accept the road map "in principle"—a standard Middle East negotiating ploy—although both sides have major differences with it. In particular, Ariel Sharon's government has insisted that Palestinians must end all attacks before Israel is required to take any steps on the proposed "road."

Quite apart from its wildly optimistic timetable, many substantive objections can and should be raised to the road map.[1] Still, it may be stipulated that the plan's aim—a two-state solution—is a reasonable one, accepted by the present Israeli government. But the mere recitation of a valid aim, even when coupled with a scheme for negotiations and escalating concessions, will hardly suffice to realize the peace envisioned by the road map's authors. The problem is that this road map, like many plans for Middle East peace, expects to bring an end to Palestinian violence against Israel without addressing the reasons why the Palestinians have deliberately and repeatedly chosen that path.

Dennis Ross, the former U.S. negotiator for the Middle East, recently admitted that, ever since the last Gulf war, he and other U.S. negotiators failed to take seriously the PA's steadfast refusal to end violence. (As Ross put it in State Department doublespeak: "The prudential issues of compliance were neglected and politicized by the Americans in favor of keeping the peace process afloat.") Instead, in the face of the continuing violence, the United States kept pressing Israel to make further concessions, thereby convincing Palestinians that they could go on cheating and killing and still procure the benefits for which they had been negotiating. In the end, it seemed reasonable to suppose that they might even force Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza as it had been forced to withdraw from southern Lebanon in the summer of 2000.

But Palestinian violence is a much more serious and difficult problem than even Dennis Ross now admits. It is the product of an environment that fosters, shelters, encourages, and rewards acts aimed at nullifying Israel's very existence. And that environment is itself the creation not only of the Palestinians, or of the Arabs, but also of the international community—including the United States. To change this situation requires changing not just the actions and attitudes of Palestinians but the policies and practices of others, again including the United States. No recognition of these facts, let alone any acknowledgment of the need to do something about them, has been made part of the road map—which is again why it shares the basic flaw of every Middle East peace plan that has preceded it.

II

THE POLICIES and practices I have in mind can be broken down into categories, of which the first has to do with terrorism.

The United States portrays itself, properly, as leading the worldwide effort to combat terrorism. Some longstanding American policies, however, have *contributed* to terrorism, and especially to terrorism against Israel. Although steps have been taken to rectify matters in the wake of September 11, terrorists and supporters of terrorism continue to be abetted by the United States in their determination to control the destiny of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Consider, first, the longstanding strategy of Arab states and the PLO to keep as many Palestinians as possible living under horrible conditions in refugee camps, close to Israel. The camps, first set up after the 1948 war that followed the establishment of the state of Israel, are administered by an arm of the United Nations, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). This agency now spends more than $400 million a year to assist a population that has swollen over the last half-century to some 4.5 million persons, relatively few of whom are refugees by any accepted definition of the term. The whole system could not have been better designed both to endanger Israel's security and to damage its moral reputation.

In the late 1980's, when I was running the legal adviser's office in the State Department, my colleague Nicholas Rostow and I proposed to Secretary George Shultz that the U.S. move toward end-

[1] See, for example, Joshua Muravchik, "Road Map to Nowhere," in the March 31 *Weekly Standard*, and Daniel Pipes, "Does Israel Need a Plan?" in the February COMMENTARY. (An exchange on the Pipes article appears in this issue starting on page 10—ED.)

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ing its financial support of UNRWA programs that perpetuated the exploitation of refugees as tools of the radical Palestinian cause. The "building"—as the Department is called by insiders—rose up in opposition. Our diplomats acknowledged that the camps were awful places that bred hatred and terrorism. But, they claimed, it was too late to do anything about it, and anyway the camps would disappear once peace was achieved. They declined to consider the possibility that the camps were helping to *prevent* peace from being achieved.[2]

What would an alternative look like? It would include plans for building permanent homes for Palestinian refugees within Palestinian territories on the West Bank or in nearby states. As the scholar Scott B. Lasensky has recently suggested, incentive programs could also be put in place to encourage refugees to relocate and neighboring Arab states to accept them. Such resettlement could commence immediately; as long as it does not, we will be continuing to aid in solidifying the sentiments that lead to terrorism.

Second, the Palestinian educational system is an abomination; it, too, is largely funded by the UN, with the substantial support of American taxpayers. In their schools, Palestinian children are taught mendacious versions of their own history as well as of Jewish culture, history, and beliefs. Generations have been fed on propaganda that denies the legitimacy of the state of Israel while simultaneously glorifying intolerance, fanaticism, and "martyrdom."

Very little that is actually useful—engineering, computer technology, science, finance—is taught in these schools. In the private, religiously funded schools, things are still worse. There, in the words of Itamar Marcus, "children have been taught to hate, and to die for Allah. Their childhood has been destroyed by indoctrination to hate and kill Jews as well as Americans and Westerners in general."

The UN and the United States have allowed these terrible practices to continue for years. Although, recently, efforts have been made to restrict the flow of funds to some schools, little if anything has been done to halt the teachings themselves. How can Palestinians realistically be expected to accept Israel as long as they continue to convey to their children that Israel is *un*acceptable, and that terrorism against it is a noble undertaking?

Third, our policies have worked to prevent Israel from defending itself against terrorism. Nowhere is this clearer than in our relations with the highest level of Palestinian political power. The PA has advocated, planned, financed, and rewarded terrorism against Israel and Jews. And yet, during the Oslo years and for many months during the current *intifada*, the State Department persistently called on Jerusalem to go on turning over to the PA the sums collected by Israel for its use. Only Israel's refusal to go along prevented us from enabling the PA to increase the level of violence and thus forestalling the very negotiations we wanted to see resumed.

Aside from government funding, the PA and other terrorist groups also receive massive financial support from a network of private companies, humanitarian fronts, and wealthy individuals, some of them with American addresses. This is consistent with the pattern used by al Qaeda in financing the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings. Recent indictments of individuals like Sami al-Arian of Florida State University and of the leaders of "charities" like the Global Relief Foundation of Illinois, the Benevolence International Foundation of Chicago, and the Holy Land Foundation in Texas will help limit the flow of such funds. But much more needs to be done to curb the resources of terrorists—a subject about which the authors of the road map, aside from their vague and general call for action against terrorism, are silent.

Terrorists have also benefited from unreasonable efforts to restrict Israeli responses to their operations. The United States, for example, has known for many years that, in addition to those associated with the PLO, at least three major terrorist groups operate in Israel: Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Until recently, however, the State Department has joined in castigating Israel for capturing or killing leaders and members of these groups. It was wrong to do so. It is neither an "assassination" nor a "nonjudicial execution" to target an individual who has killed and intends to continue to kill one's citizens if that individual cannot safely be apprehended. Such conduct is part of every state's legitimate right of self-defense.

After 9/11, the U.S. recognized the need for an active defense against terror. We killed many terrorists in Afghanistan, and we continue to hunt down al Qaeda operatives and leaders. Where possible, they are arrested and held as prisoners; where necessary, they are killed. We have also undertaken to assist several states in similar defensive operations—even while criticizing Israel for exercising

[2] In the event, Secretary Shultz did propose ways of improving the lot of Palestinian refugees; his ideas were rejected by the Palestinian leadership.

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its sovereign right in this regard. Are we to deny to Israel the flexibility in protecting itself and its citizens that we demand in protecting ourselves?

Besides criticizing Israel, our government and others also repeatedly accuse it of using excessive force and improper methods. There are indeed occasions when such criticism is warranted: destroying the homes of suicide bombers, which can leave entire families homeless and has sometimes resulted in the death or injury of noncombatant neighbors, is a form of collective punishment that is not legally defensible. But Israel is clearly permitted by the laws of war to destroy homes used by terrorists when necessary to attack or capture them, or to protect Israeli soldiers or civilians from attack, or in any other military operation. Although one would hardly know it from the routine condemnations that issue from the international community, most of the destruction that occurs is in fact for these proper reasons.

Not only are most criticisms of Israeli anti-terror operations baseless, some are outright fabrications, as in the case of the alleged "massacre" of "thousands" of Palestinian Arab civilians in Jenin in the spring of 2002. This charge was endorsed by the UN envoy, Terje Roed-Larsen, without even conducting an investigation. As was subsequently demonstrated, a total of 52 Palestinians died in Jenin, most of them fighters.

Israel has demonstrated its readiness to drop improper practices, including deportations, and now leads the world in developing and using nonlethal military methods. It has also apologized for mistakes and punished its own soldiers as the law requires. Such conduct is inconceivable from the PA. That is precisely why the United States government needs to protect its own credibility by declining to join those who make a habit of censuring lawful Israeli actions.

Our government has also consistently failed to come to grips with the extent and seriousness of Palestinian terror itself. The annual State Department report, *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, lists only nine terrorist attacks in Israel in 2001. In fact, there were 97. Among the 88 incidents omitted from the list were Hamas bombings in Haifa and Netanya in which twenty were killed and 140 wounded, as well as other devastating bombings by Islamic Jihad and Yasir Arafat's Fatah. This simple refusal to acknowledge reality underlies, in turn, the continuing demand by our government that Israel restore the PA's security forces—the same forces that we paid to build up in the 1990's, only to see them placed at the service of terrorism.

IN ADDITION to subsidizing refugee camps that breed terrorism as well as an educational system that justifies and extols it, and in addition to hobbling Israel's efforts to counter terrorism, we and others continue to be remiss in dealing with state support of terror.

Iran, together with Hizbullah, its proxy force in Lebanon, supports Hamas, an Islamist organization based in Gaza. Hamas also has supporting offices in other countries, including Jordan. Islamic Jihad and the PFLP are based in Syria, where they enjoy sanctuary and have been provided with training camps. These organizations also raise funds and recruits in Saudi Arabia, in Europe, and even in the United States.

Syria and Iran are on the State Department's list of states that support terrorism. By itself, this means nothing—their support for terror has continued with impunity. After 9/11, however, the UN Security Council reaffirmed the duty of states to refrain from instigating, supporting, or acquiescing in terrorist attacks on other states, and it also set out positive duties for suppressing such support. This statement offers a powerful basis for pursuing, through the "inherent right of self-defense," remedies against states supporting terror.

Even before 9/11 we ourselves insisted that if a state is unwilling or unable to prevent terrorist attacks, or if it supports such attacks, a victim-state is entitled to act in self-defense. This is the legal basis upon which, for example, President Reagan retaliated against Libya for supporting terrorist attacks on U.S. nationals in Europe, and which even President Clinton invoked in his ineffectual responses to Iraq's efforts to kill the first President Bush and to al Qaeda's bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

As for Israel, it has expressly threatened to use force against states that support or fail to prevent terrorist attacks on its citizens, although it has done so but rarely. One occasion was the hostage-release operation at Entebbe; another was the bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis; a third was the 1982 incursion into Lebanon. It now faces the far more difficult task of dealing with terrorism supported directly by Syria and Iran and indirectly by others like Saudi Arabia. These are major states with substantial military capacities, including, potentially, weapons of mass destruction.

Syria has openly acknowledged giving shelter to terrorist groups driven from Israel and the Palestinian territories, although it claims that the facilities are not being used for terrorism. Even if that were true, such support is illegal and subject to appropriate remedial action. As for Iran, former Israeli

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Prime Minister Shimon Peres identified it as long ago as March 1996 as the source of support for terrorist activity in Israel. More recently, Iran supplied the arms on the *Karine A* that had been purchased by the PA for terrorist operations; it has also supplied Hizbullah in Lebanon with some 10,000 short-range rockets, as well as Iranian-made Zelzal-2 and Fajr rockets capable of reaching Tel Aviv.

In 1986, when the Iranians were mining the Persian Gulf, we warned them to stop; when they persisted, and we caught them in the act, we destroyed half their naval vessels. They stopped. We cannot expect Israel to go on accepting state support of terrorists without acting in self-defense. If we are serious about peace in the Middle East, we and the other members of the quartet should be placing far greater emphasis on convincing Iran and Syria to alter course.

President Bush made clear where he stands in his speech of June 24, 2002: "Every nation actually committed to peace must block the shipment of Iranian supplies to [terrorist] groups, and oppose regimes that promote terror, like Iraq. And Syria must choose the right side in the war on terror by closing terrorist camps and expelling terrorist organizations." Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Condoleezza Rice, the President's national-security adviser, have emphatically reiterated this warning. Pressuring states to stop supporting terror against Israel would help create an atmosphere more conducive to peace with the Palestinians. But the pressure cannot be merely rhetorical, or limited to one or two speeches; and the results must be seen to be believed.

III

I now pass to a different class of issues relating to Palestinian violence. In negotiations between the parties, the United States has worked to keep some matters unresolved. Of these, a few are indeed so difficult as to be properly deferred. Others, however, clearly admit of only one possible resolution; if they have nevertheless been pushed off to some future date, that is because it is felt by our diplomats that they should not be foreclosed until the parties themselves come to an agreement on them. This tactic, however, has caused far more harm than good, allowing illusions to grow and take root that damage the practical prospects for peace.

Jerusalem. Every successful presidential candidate since at least Ronald Reagan has promised that, if elected, he would move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Israel's capital city of Jerusalem. Yet, once elected, every President has breached this promise, announcing that current conditions do not yet favor such a move. Sometimes Congress has attempted to cut through the issue by mandating a move to Jerusalem, only to be instructed that it must not intrude on an area of presidential prerogative.

If moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem *would* actually harm prospects for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, then it should not be moved. But the claim is spurious. Moving the U.S. embassy to the site designated for it in the western part of Jerusalem would merely acknowledge that Jerusalem is in fact the capital of Israel. It would not eliminate from discussion the issue of East, or Arab, Jerusalem, or the issue of who is to control the Old City, which includes the Temple Mount and other holy places. At most, it would make it harder for Palestinians to raise West Jerusalem as a negotiating chip in their efforts to secure control of the rest of the city. Far from being an obstacle to peace, it would tend to force Palestinians to confront the real compromises they would need to make if they truly desired peace.

More fundamentally, our continued failure to demonstrate that we accept Jerusalem as Israel's legitimate capital has encouraged virtually all other states to behave similarly. This, too, feeds the openly expressed hope of radical Palestinians and their supporters that somehow, some day, Israel can be pushed back to its pre-1948 lines, if not into the sea. Palestinians are in the grip of quite enough disabling fantasies as it is; they can well afford to surrender the fantasy of undoing Israel's claim to Jerusalem.

Right of return. At the Camp David negotiations in the summer of 2000, American diplomats were surprised by the fierceness with which Palestinian representatives insisted upon a "right of return" for all Palestinian refugees to Israel proper. If acted upon by the millions claiming to be refugees, such a right of return would mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state. The Palestinian position was especially stunning in light of confident predictions by Yossi Beilin, Israel's former deputy foreign minister, that no such right would be invoked, but only a right to appropriate compensation for property and other measures of relief.

The United States bears some responsibility for encouraging Palestinians in this regard. Specifically, we backed the Arab interpretation of a 1949 General Assembly resolution, number 194, that has no legal weight, that was originally rejected by all Arab states, and that is but one small item in the

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great mass of anti-Israel declarations by that body. More recently, we were among those welcoming a February 2002 Saudi peace "initiative" that explicitly invoked a right of return.

The road map, in turn, cites the Saudi plan in a positive manner. Though it does—finally—call in passing for a "realistic" solution to the refugee issue, any plan seriously aimed at leading toward peace, and backed by the United States, should make it crystal clear at the outset that a right of return is antithetical to peace, and must be renounced. Furthermore, any reference to the rights of Palestinian refugees should be balanced by one to the legitimate claims of the hundreds of thousands of Jews expelled from Arab countries, which must be satisfied on the basis of the same principles. Justice requires no less.

SETTLEMENTS AND BORDERS. Although the road map leaves the final borders of Israel and a future Palestinian state to final-status negotiations, it does insist on a complete cessation of all settlement activity by Jews, including "natural growth," beyond the Israeli side of the pre-June 1967 borders. State Department officials have long adhered to the notion that Security Council resolution 242, issued in the aftermath of the June 1967 Six-Day war, requires treating those borders as final; if, they say, Israel wishes any adjustment in them, it will have to compensate the Palestinians with some additional concession, probably in the form of land on Israel's side.

The State Department's interpretation of resolution 242 is not only mistaken—the literature on this point is formidable—but it could end up presenting at least as great an obstacle to peace as Israel's policy of building settlements in areas heavily populated by Palestinians. In Israel's history, settlements have a central and necessary place. The road map disregards both this history and the plain legitimacy of building places to live in what Israelis regard as their historic (though not exclusive) homeland. The road map also errs in treating every Israeli settlement as equally troublesome, even though some are obviously defensible on security grounds and minimally disruptive to Palestinian inhabitants of the territories. It thereby once again creates unwarranted expectations among Palestinians.

The settlements issue cannot be resolved by means of solemn declarations. In my own view, a pragmatic approach that is not anchored in the pre-June 1967 lines would have a far greater likelihood of success in any set of good-faith negotiations than the unrealistic and indiscriminate proscription contained in the road map. It would require, among other things, considering the settlements in categories.

A small number of settlements are illegal; Israel has ordered them closed, but it has not always enforced the order. If, however, these particular communities may be regarded as a genuine obstacle to peace, the same cannot be said of the largest settlements, which lie virtually adjacent to the pre-June 1967 lines and contain some 80 percent of the settler population. Nor would "natural growth" in or close to these settlements be a serious problem, since it is widely recognized that the areas will become part of Israel in some appropriate exchange. As for the many other settlements that exist in the territories, while some Israelis would struggle to retain control over all of them, they would be unable to prevail if the government considered it in Israel's best interests to act otherwise. Ariel Sharon, it should be remembered, removed the settlers from Sinai to implement the 1978 peace treaty with Egypt. Nor should the road map or any other plan preclude Israel and the Palestinians from developing methods for preserving some settlements under Palestinian control, or under joint administration.

By tacitly accepting interpretations of reality that unfairly put the onus on Israel—in this case by demanding a "freeze" on settlements as if all settlement activity were either illegal or evidence of evil intent, or both—the United States helps to perpetuate Arab revanchism and works against the possibility of peace.

IV

BEYOND, ABOVE, and behind every failed policy that has been devised to nudge forward the prospects of reconciliation in the Middle East there lies a simple if often unacknowledged fact: there can be no peace until the Arabs of the region openly accept the existence of Israel as a permanent, sovereign state. For 55 years, most of Israel's Arab enemies have refused to do so. For 55 years, the community of nations has tolerated, acquiesced in, and thereby confirmed the propriety of that refusal.

To this day, Israel is treated in international affairs and by most members of the United Nations as a pariah state. The United States, despite the generous and indispensable support it has extended to Israel, has too often gone along with that treatment. From time to time, as the late Daniel P. Moynihan documented in these pages, it has even "joined the jackals."[3]

[3] "Joining the Jackals: The U.S. at the UN, 1977-1980," February 1981.

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The blanket exemption from treating Israel as an ordinary state and an equal member of the international community has had a pervasive impact on the calculus of war and peace. To Israel's enemies, it has sent a signal that the conflict between them may yet be resolved through Israel's complete delegitimization and destruction. To Israel itself, it has sent exactly the same dire signal.

The UN. Nowhere is this more salient than at the UN itself. There, Israel has been refused a place in the regional grouping of Middle Eastern states and hence an opportunity to serve on the Security Council and other UN bodies—an opportunity afforded to *every* other member state. In addition, UN members have prevented Israel from serving in any important role on virtually any functional agency or body. The number of Israelis serving in significant UN positions has always been small, even relative to Israel's size; after a series of votes against Israeli candidates, that number is now down to a single person whose term is scheduled to expire within the next year.

The notion that the U.S. and other friends of Israel can do nothing about this outrageous situation is simply wrong. For years, the State Department agreed with the UN legal office that the 1975 General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism could not be repealed. Once a resolution has been adopted, the argument went, it can only be modified in its effects by some subsequent resolution. The first Bush administration put the lie to this idea when Secretary of State James Baker developed a plan for repealing the resolution, thus marking the beginning of the end of that infamous chapter in the history of anti-Semitism. During the current Bush administration, similarly, the President and Secretary of State Powell refused to go along with the racist attacks on Israel at the United Nations conference in Durban in the summer of 2001; Powell canceled his appearance, and the U.S. delegation withdrew when it became clear that the conference had been hijacked by anti-Semites.

There is every reason to approach the issue of Israel's continued ostracism in international bodies in the same spirit and with the same conviction. Nothing meaningful can be done internationally without U.S. involvement and support, and nothing is more important to the principle of sovereign equality than the fair and equitable treatment of member states of the United Nations. Are we to go on approving, by our silence, a situation wherein a true pariah state like Libya can serve a term as chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights while democratic Israel is refused the right to participate in multilateral affairs? It is a grotesque charade, and it dishonors us.

Normalizing relations. Arab states—even the few that have concluded formal peace agreements—have refused to normalize relations with Israel. Egypt, for example, has created many obstacles to trade, and although it has opened its doors to Israeli tourists willing to brave the pervasive anti-Semitic climate in that country, it has severely restricted tourism from Egypt to Israel. Our State Department has rejected the idea of working to alter this behavior. Not that it opposes greater openness; it simply regards the issue as subordinate to the "peace process" with the Palestinians, and has not wished to irritate the Egyptians.

The same attitude is reflected in the road map. That document barely mentions Arab-Israeli relations, and then only to call on Arab states during phase II to "restore pre-*intifada* links to Israel (trade office, etc.)" and to revive certain multilateral discussions—water, the environment, economic development, refugees, and arms control—begun after the 1991 Madrid conference. But these measures amount virtually to nothing. Few Arab states had significant links with Israel prior to the *intifada*, and multilateral discussions, however potentially interesting they may be, do not in themselves imply or depend on a meaningful acceptance of Israel. "Even if peace is accomplished," Syria's President Bashar al-Assad remarked matter-of-factly in late March of this year, "Israel will not be a legitimate state."

Progress has been made in relations between Israel and Jordan, and between Israel and Turkey. Much more could be done—by us—to encourage Arab states and others to deal with Israel as an equal in commercial matters. Instead, we have declined to hold the international community to a proper standard of behavior, and we have acquiesced in the exclusion of Israel from the economic and political benefits of normalization.

Israel as ally. In 1990, as we prepared to confront Saddam Hussein over his seizure and occupation of Kuwait, we built, under the authorization of the Security Council, a coalition of forces in which every state willing to participate was welcomed, except one: Israel. During the ensuing conflict, when Iraq fired 39 missiles at Israel in an effort to draw it into the conflict, the U.S. asked the Israeli government not to respond; in deference to us, and in vi-

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olation of its cardinal principles of self-defense, Israel agreed.

This year, in preparing our latest campaign in Iraq, we again asked Israel to stay on the sidelines for fear of alienating Arab allies. As insurance, we took measures to defend Israel from Iraqi attack by placing missile-defense units on its eastern border and providing unprecedented access to battlefield intelligence. Once again Israel went along, although this time Prime Minister Sharon reserved the right to respond if attacked.

Asking Israel to stay out of the coalition against Saddam in 1991 and then to refrain from exercising its right of self-defense was morally wrong, tactically shortsighted, and very harmful to the goal of securing Israel's acceptance in the Middle East. The decision to keep Israel out of the war gave credence to a preposterous premise: that Arab states would have preferred to let Saddam keep Kuwait than permit Israel to fight in the same campaign with them. Naturally, Saddam exploited this premise by attempting to draw Israel into defending itself and thereby undermining the coalition against him.

A way could have been found in 1991 to welcome Israel into the coalition against Saddam without destroying it. The U.S. did not even try. Instead, it granted validity to the notion that Israel should be excluded. We in effect said to the Arab and Muslim states, "We don't necessarily share your view, but we understand and accept your need to avoid any appearance of countenancing the legitimacy of the state of Israel."

Why should we continue to operate on this premise, when what we should really be doing is working to challenge and overcome it? The principle informing our action should be that Israel—our *ally*, remember—is a state with the same inalienable rights as all other states. President Bush has quite rightly demanded that Arab states make clear "that they will live in peace with Israel." We should be doing all we can to enforce that demand.

THE JEWISH QUESTION. Some one million Palestinian Arabs—a fifth of Israel's population—live there as citizens. Jewish settlers in the West Bank number, at most, a tenth of the area's population—but the guiding assumption of all international efforts to achieve peace is that *no* Jew should be allowed to reside in *any* Palestinian area.

Some Israeli extremists, it is true, have attempted to inflame existing animosities between Palestinian Arabs and Jews in the hope of securing permanent Israeli control of certain hallowed sites in territories claimed by Palestinians. Their efforts would be futile if Palestinians accepted Jews in their midst. They do not. On the contrary, they have attacked and killed Jews seeking to live in places like Hebron, an ancient and holy Jewish seat where Jews lived for centuries before being slaughtered and driven out in the 1920's.

The notion of a Palestine in which Jews are not allowed to live is anathema.[4] It implicitly affirms the hatred and violence that has made the Arab and Muslim Middle East virtually *Judenrein*, and it thoroughly undercuts any hope for peace. It should be anathema, above all, to the United States. Palestinians should be required to agree explicitly that Jews may live in their midst. Arab states should be expected to reverse anti-Jewish policies and laws, based as they are on racist ideas that are not only intrinsically offensive but completely inconsistent with peaceful coexistence. *Judenrein* should be an impermissible policy, everywhere.

As for the much larger and excruciating question of Arab anti-Semitism, this is not the place to comment at length on its frightening tenacity, its ferocity, and its worldwide reach. What must be said, though, is that the failure of our government at the highest levels to denounce the genocidal teachings that issue regularly from the press, the mosques, and the schools of Arab and Muslim regimes, some of them our longstanding allies, is shameful.

This failure has consequences in policy. Throughout Israel's history, and especially now, Palestinians have acted as though they have a perfect right to kill Jews with impunity. Little wonder: they live in a culture in which armed men, and men of God, publicly and routinely call for the murder of Jews. Fundamentalist Muslims and nationalist Arabs alike preach and practice a racist ideology based on the inhumanity of Jews. In their ravings, Jews—"dogs," "cockroaches," "filthy bacterial growth"—deserve to be killed en masse and uprooted from a land they have defiled by their presence. When Arab terrorists are themselves killed by Israeli reprisals, Palestinians parade through the streets of their cities with guns, masks, and suicide-bomber outfits, crying to heaven for vengeance.

All this would be intolerable, and shocking beyond belief, in any society based upon law. Yet so pervasive is it in Palestinian society, as indeed in Arab society generally, that one doubts even Israelis have taken in its full dimension. About it, the road map utters not a word, and neither has our government. Instead, as I have already noted, some gov-

[4] Hillel Halkin has written powerfully on this theme. See, in COMMENTARY, his "Why the Settlements Should Stay," June 2002.

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ernment spokesmen have unconscionably criticized *Israel* for targeting terrorists in order to prevent further homicidal attacks on its people.

The same lack of moral compass can be seen in the equanimity with which the civilized world responded to Saddam Hussein's lavish cash awards to the families of suicide bombers and other Palestinian "martyrs," with the highest amounts reserved for those who killed children and other innocents within Israel proper. President Bush was the only Western leader to condemn this monstrous behavior. Western indifference to Saddam's public offer to pay for the murder of Jews, combined with the major increase in anti-Semitism in Western Europe itself, cannot but have reassured Israel's Arab enemies that they are not alone in regarding Jews as a lesser form of humanity, and Jewish life as an object of little value.

V

However much it may exasperate those bent on "bringing an end" to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, decades of war, terror, and hatred are not to be undone through declarations and deadlines. The problem is not one of borders and territory; it is not one of schedules; it is not even one of a Palestinian state. The problem is existential.

Israel is at present capable of defending itself against any conventional armed threat; it may also be expected to deter any overt attempt to attack it with weapons of mass destruction. But such capabilities are no longer sufficient to ensure security. An attack by an extremist group, secretly supported by a state capable of providing it with weapons of mass destruction, can no longer be ruled out of the question. Alternatively, a state could act irrationally, driven by fanatical beliefs or by leaders prepared to absorb grave punishment in exchange for wreaking irreversible harm on Israel.

That is what is meant by an existential threat—a threat to Israel's very existence, fueled by a radical and uncompromising hatred of that existence and by the implacable determination to liquidate it. Some Arab and Muslim states, along with private and religious groups around the world, have adopted the destruction of Israel as official policy. Others give sanctuary and active help to groups committed to that end. With support from Germany, France, Russia, and other nations, states controlled by Islamic extremists or Arab radicals have acquired or are acquiring nuclear devices and other weapons of mass destruction. The former Iranian prime minister Hashemi Rafsanjani—a "moderate"—has declared that "the use of a nuclear bomb in Israel will leave nothing on the ground"; Pakistan's retired intelligence chief, General Hamid Gul, now a "strategic adviser" to the Islamist parties that control the Pakistani legislature, has asserted that "we have the nuclear capability that can destroy Madras [India], surely the same missile can do the same to Tel Aviv."

In the democratic West, no one wishes to believe this—it is too awful. And that, too, adds to the magnitude of the threat. By omission as much as by commission, the United States and other democracies have encouraged radical Palestinians and their supporters to cling to their dream of eliminating the Jewish state. They have acquiesced in and thereby promoted the separate and unequal treatment of Israel as a member state of the community of nations. They have truckled to, and pressured Israel to reach an accommodation with, the most radical elements among its adversaries, while subsidizing and turning a blind eye to the culture of violence in which generations of those adversaries have been raised. When it comes to the workings of anti-Semitism, they have chosen not to absorb, and not to act upon, the indelible lessons of history.

In late March, President Bush's national security adviser Condoleezza Rice remarked that, although the administration welcomed "comments" on the roadmap, the document itself was not susceptible of "renegotiation." If true, that is a pity. A road map to peace is a fine thing, but if it is based in denial and wishful thinking it will be rightly doomed. The task for diplomats and all other interested parties is to force an end to the murder of Jews and to the effort to destroy the Jewish state; in pursuit of that goal, it is as necessary to delegitimize Palestinian violence once and for all as it is to prevent and repudiate the delegitimization of Israel. When that necessary condition is met in word and deed, all manner of desirable and mutually beneficial outcomes will become negotiable; but not before.

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Why Our Troops Should Stay in "Old Europe"

Frederick W. Kagan

WHY SHOULD we continue to maintain an expensive, permanent military presence in Europe? This question, raised over a decade ago when the Soviet Union passed from the scene, arose with fresh urgency this year as our European allies, in particular France and Germany, vigorously obstructed our efforts to obtain international support for action in Iraq. In the aftermath of that war, scrutiny of our overseas deployments is likely to intensify still further.

General James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, began the most recent flurry by proposing to reduce the U.S. presence in Germany, to move some U.S. forces into bases in Eastern Europe, to shorten the normal tour of service, and to shrink our overall military "footprint" on the continent by withdrawing many families of soldiers stationed there. According to some reports, he would reduce the overall number of soldiers, which now stands at approximately 60,000, as well.

Is that a good idea? What makes it difficult to answer this question simply is that so many issues and, even, emotions are involved. General Jones and others have defended his proposal on practical grounds. It makes sense, they say, to move forces closer to the areas—primarily the Balkans and the Middle East—to which they are likely to be sent in times of conflict. In addition, some have supported the proposal because it would punish our German allies for refusing to rally to us when we needed them. Still others are attracted mainly by the money we could save if we ended the continual movement of military families to and fro. Finally, to enthusiasts of NATO expansion, a shift in basing would strengthen our links with new and prospective members of that alliance in Eastern Europe.

Some of the arguments in favor of redeploying our forces rest on military-technical considerations, others on geostrategic grounds. In reality, the two are inseparable; invariably, actions taken for military-technical reasons have geostrategic consequences. Still, for the purpose of analysis it is worth looking at each on its merits.

GENERAL JONES is a former commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. This is a pertinent fact in evaluating his proposal, for the Marines are structured very differently from the Army.

Consider the U.S. Army presence in Europe. There, soldiers and officers are stationed in permanent bases, usually for two- or three-year rotations. They bring their families with them, which means that the infrastructure needed to support these families must be maintained as well. There are Army schools, health- and child-care facilities, PX's, commissaries, and so forth. With each move, the family's possessions are relocated at government expense.

By contrast, Marine units serve on troop and air-

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craft carriers for six months at a time; during this period, they are available to move rapidly to an enemy's coast, to seize beaches, ports, or airfields by means of helicopter-borne infantry supported by their own airplanes, and even to fight mechanized warfare with M1 tanks. Once upon a time, the Marines' striking power was confined to the ocean littoral, but no longer; as they have showed in Afghanistan and Iraq, that power can reach hundreds of miles inland.

The core of General Jones's proposal is to make the Army more like the lean, mean Marines. Under it, soldiers would leave their families behind and deploy to Europe for six-month training tours, ready to move at a moment's notice to hot spots in the Balkans, the Middle East, or elsewhere. The bases themselves would become—in a much-ridiculed phrase that General Jones came to regret—"lily pads," to which forces would jump from the U.S. and from which they would jump to where they were needed. For the first time, Army forces in Europe would become truly expeditionary.

But we have already glimpsed the problem: the Army is not the Marines. Marines keep their equipment on ships, and they themselves can be stationed in advance near a potential enemy. The Army's heavy forces, by contrast, reside on inland bases, from which they must be moved to ports and then by ship to wherever they have to go. An enduring issue for the Army is the length of time it takes to get troops and equipment to the theater of war.

Europe, whether Western *or* Eastern, is much closer to both the Balkans and the Middle East than is the United States, and forces based there can get to trouble spots in those regions much more rapidly than forces based in America. The dirty little secret of General Jones's plan is that by reducing the number of U.S. forces in Europe at any given time, it would also dramatically reduce the deployability of our Army, making it not more expeditionary but less so.

We currently maintain a total of five combat brigades in Europe on a permanent basis. Four heavy brigades (two divisions) are in Germany and one airborne brigade is in Italy. They are there all the time, running through the same eighteen-month "readiness cycle" as units in the U.S.: six months of training, six months of deployment or readiness for deployment, and six months of recovery (during which soldiers go on leave, are transferred among units, perform routine maintenance, etc.).

It is clear from his proposed six-month regime that General Jones wants to keep in Europe only those troops that are go-to-war ready, and that those troops would be honing their skills at East European training centers. Theoretically, we could maintain as many units in that status—five combat brigades—as we currently maintain in all three phases of the cycle, but only if we committed *fifteen* brigades, or half of the entire active Army, to supporting such a project (i.e., five in go-to-war status, five training for it, and five recovering from it). More likely, General Jones has in mind keeping in Europe only the one-and-a-half or two brigades that are currently go-to-war ready at any moment.

The difference is, obviously, enormous. Our plans early this year for war in Iraq foresaw an invasion by about ten brigades; by the end of March, there were eleven brigades in Iraq, with more on the way. In the meantime, our peacekeepers in the Balkans number more like a brigade and a half. Under the one option, we would have in Europe (as we now do) about half of the force we believed necessary to fight a significant adversary like Iraq. Under the other, we would have enough to conduct a significant peacekeeping operation—but only a very small fraction of what we would need to fight a war. In the latter case, and in the event of a crisis calling for more than a couple of brigades, *all* of the rest of the Army units would have to come from the United States—a much greater distance. Once again, the effect would be to make our forces less expeditionary, not more.

If General Jones's proposal fails to give to the Army the benefits the Marines derive from their approach, it simultaneously imposes on the Army some of the disadvantages. The Army's biggest problem is deployment; the Marines' biggest problem is sustainment. Although they can move very rapidly and strike very rapidly, the Marines cannot supply themselves. The relative lightness of their forces is achieved in part at the expense of the large and sophisticated support structure that accompanies Army units, feeds, clothes, and houses them, and provides fuel and spare parts for their equipment. During the first Persian Gulf war, Marine units had to rely on the Army supply system to keep them going. That supply system came, in significant measure, from Germany.

One of the virtues of keeping five brigades permanently based in Europe is that we also keep the support structure necessary to supply them. If we eliminated the permanent basing of units and maintained only the structure for one-and-a-half or two brigades, we would lack the wherewithal to

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support a large deployment rapidly. Logistical support would have to be drawn from the United States and sent across the Atlantic—dramatically delaying the start of operations, placing an additional burden on our already inadequate airlift and sealift capabilities, and severely hampering the resupply of units in forward positions. Here, too, the Jones proposal, while aimed at making the Army more flexible and battle-ready, would in fact leave it emaciated and less mobile than it is now.

AMERICAN FORCES are now deployed in the Balkans, and it looks as if they will be there for a long time. Should we not move our permanent bases closer to where those units are actually engaged? Would not this, at least, result in a more "expeditionary" force?

It would not. American forces now in Bosnia and Kosovo do not live well. They are without their families, and they lodge in basic, bare-bones camps. Although (for the most part) no one is shooting at them, their duty is nevertheless onerous, the more so because they are so far from their bases. We could indeed ameliorate their condition by establishing permanent bases either in Bosnia and Kosovo or just across the frontiers of their eastern neighbors. But, political complexities aside, doing so would be unwise, and extremely backward-looking.

The transportation networks both within Bosnia and Kosovo and leading from there to most of the border regions of the neighboring states are very poor. On the map, it may seem to be less far from these regions to ports on the Adriatic or the Black Sea than it is from Germany, but the actual route is almost certainly not any faster and probably rather slower. Beyond this, the idea that, wherever we happen to be, there we should dig in makes sense only if our aim is to consolidate successive conquests—which it is not. It makes no sense at all in light of our real purpose in maintaining troops in Europe, which is to facilitate their deployment elsewhere.

What about the money we could save by moving our bases to Eastern Europe? That depends on an accurate estimate of what would be entailed in such a move, and what we would have to spend to make it happen.

East European states do not now have training areas that American ground forces can use. For one thing, Warsaw Pact countries did not care for their soldiers as we do. They maintained mass conscript armies in which soldiers served for two years and then left. Since they were also vicious dictatorships, unanswerable to their own populations, they had no need to treat their soldiers well—and they did not. The result is that housing and base facilities are, to put it mildly, far below NATO standards, and unfit even for six-month tours. In addition, most of these bases have not been maintained for over a decade, and would have to be repaired to bring them back even to the condition they were in at the end of the cold war.

For another thing, the Soviets and their satellites were environmental pirates of the worst sort. Many of the bases are contaminated with toxic materials, and some with the residue of chemical weapons. When the Germans began to clean up East German barracks after reunification, the removal of unexploded ordnance turned out to be vastly more expensive than anticipated. These environmental nightmares, too, would have to be rectified before U.S. troops could move in.

Then, too, even if the bases could somehow be made ready, most of the maneuver areas are too small to support our sort of training. The two-year conscripts of the USSR and its vassal states focused on basic skills and, at more advanced stages, on training at the company level. Our professional soldiers acquire their basic skills within the first year or so and then regularly reach the level of battalion and brigade maneuvers. Soviet-era bases would not easily support such training; although some of them could no doubt be expanded, land, even in Eastern Europe, costs money.

Finally, aside from the very significant down payment that would be needed before we could think about moving our forces eastward, there would also be the expense of shutting down our existing bases. True, we could recoup most of those costs over a period of years, but the overall savings is almost certain to be far less than current optimistic statements would suggest.

In sum, the gains in military efficiency promised by advocates of General Jones's proposal are highly questionable. But the most critical problems with it lie in a different realm altogether.

THAT THE German government behaved reprehensibly during the past months is hard to dispute. Its opposition to the use of force to disarm Saddam Hussein was troubling enough; far worse was the adoption of a platform of overt anti-Americanism on the part of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, a blatantly political move aimed at securing the victory of his Red-Green coalition in a national election.

Whether it is in our long-term interest to punish Germany for Schroeder's cynical manipulations

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is, however, another question. Since his narrow win in September, two regional elections have been held in Germany and in both of them Schroeder's candidates were resoundingly defeated. What is more, Germany's opposition parties have sensed a potential opportunity to unseat the present government, precisely over the issue of its anti-Americanism. It may be, then, that the current obstructionist program will not outlast the Schroeder government, or that Schroeder will be forced to backtrack.

If what we are seeing in Germany is a temporary condition, the removal of American forces, in whole or in part, would be permanent—and would be seen, moreover, as punitive in its intent. Before embarking on any such move, we need to consider its implications.

There is no significant movement now in Germany to throw our forces out. On the contrary, leaders of many German municipalities have consistently opposed the closure of bases in their areas. Their motive is, in part, economic—American bases create jobs and inject money into the economy. But as General Montgomery Meigs, the former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, recently testified before the House Armed Services Committee, economics is only part of it. Our soldiers in Germany are our best ambassadors, helping to cement our relationship with the German people. That relationship is invariably the first thing mentioned by local German officials worried about base closings.

By withdrawing our forces from Germany, not only would we antagonize those whose communities would be hurt by it and who have consistently supported our presence, but we would be working actively to weaken the links that remain. Such a move might be defensible if Germany were a country of no great consequence to us, or if we could supplant it with other allies. But that is not the case. Not only is Germany one of the linchpins of Europe, it is also the keystone of NATO. Unlike France, Germany sits on all of the critical military-planning committees, and so is in a position to oppose any effort to use the alliance in support of our policies. To imagine an alliance in which Germany is isolated and hostile is to imagine an alliance that is no longer NATO.

It may be objected that NATO has already lost its purpose. But if so, do we want things to stay that way? NATO has served us very well—not by fighting wars, but by consolidating our own commitment to keep the peace, and by giving us a powerful voice in European affairs. To the extent that we weaken NATO, or acquiesce in its weakening, we will weaken that voice and encourage the development of a Europe over whose policies we have no control.

There is an undeniable temptation in imagining that we might replace the old, faltering structure by revolutionizing our alliances altogether. As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld seemed to suggest in his comments about the old Europe and the new, just as American ground forces strengthened our bond with Germany, so they would strengthen our bond with the fragile democracies of Eastern Europe. Not only are they more in need of support, but, with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the evaporation of any threat to Western Europe, they constitute a new frontier, and are arguably more important to us in the world that is now forming before our eyes.

Unquestionably it is in our interest to forge close ties with these new NATO members—to support them in their efforts to solidify their democracies and set right their economies, and to secure them against the destructive effects of conflicts on their periphery. But to *what* are we binding them? We could focus either on bilateral arrangements or on drawing them into an existing alliance in which their relationship with us is only part of the picture.

The new NATO members are hungry for recognition, for security, for support, for funds. They have shown over the past several months that they are willing to bid high for our friendship, at least in moral terms. It may also be, as some claim, that, having only recently emerged from the grip of a despotic regime, they value their freedom more highly than the West European states and are consequently more willing to fight to defend the freedom of others. In supporting them, might we not create a "Little Entente" of our own as a counterweight to Germany and France?

Unfortunately, what the East European countries need at least as much as membership in NATO is membership in the European Union (EU). Powerful elements in Germany and France are making a bid to form an independent Europe under the control of their two countries. If we play into their hands by seeming to punish Germany, we must expect that they in their turn will punish the smaller and weaker European states that would align with us. The economic health of these states, and therefore the stability of their polities, is dependent upon their relations with the EU and the two major powers that dominate it; nothing we could offer would offset the price they would pay for

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falling out with those powers. Nor can we hope to establish meaningful bilateral relations with the East European states by pursuing a policy that puts them at odds with the EU's leading powers.

But now let us imagine that, in reaching out to the new NATO countries, we mean to bind them more tightly to NATO itself. What sort of NATO would we wish to bind them to? One in which Germany was pursuing an independent course? That would be a NATO without real value to us. In sum, strengthening our relations with the smaller states depends critically on maintaining and improving our relations with the major powers, and especially with Germany.

WHY DID we keep ground forces in Europe during the cold war? They were never intended to defeat the advance of the Red Army, by which they were outnumbered by margins of ten to one and more. Their military purpose was to buy time, to delay a Soviet advance while the Western world mobilized and rushed to their support. Their political purpose was somewhat different, and more important.

The deployment of soldiers together with their families was the most dramatic possible statement of America's commitment to defend its allies—and the clearest evidence of our determination to keep the peace. On account of their presence on European soil, no one could ever doubt that we would fight to defend Europe if the Soviets attacked. *This* was the bond that cemented NATO—the palpable, human assurance that we would not leave the Europeans to their own devices.

If that was true of European deployments in general, American soldiers in West Germany served a more particular purpose: they made it possible for that defeated country to be rehabilitated, minimally rearmed, and reintegrated into the European community, without arousing the fears of its neighbors that it might once again turn to aggression. Our permanent presence in Germany enabled the Germans to skimp on their own defense and, in contrast to all of their former major enemies, accept a non-nuclear status. Simultaneously, it enabled the French and the British to accept the restoration to health of their former adversary.

Many decades after NATO's founding, some of these considerations still apply. Germany will not immediately embark on a massive arms program or develop nuclear weapons just because we pull out a few tens of thousands of soldiers. But any such move would indeed compel the Germans to reassess both their security and their role in the world. It is hardly in our interest, or the world's, for the Germans to engage in such a reassessment. The relative disarmament of Germany has been one of the most important factors in securing more than 50 years of peace in Europe, and we should do nothing to alter that situation.

At the end of the cold war, we did not pull our forces out of Europe, and the Europeans did not ask us to do so. Having defeated our adversary, we declared, in effect, that we would not forsake the world's security. Our first war with Iraq, fought in 1991 largely with American soldiers drawn from Europe, underlined that declaration. Now, in the looming aftermath of our second Iraq war—this one fought over French and German opposition—we will once again face a test. If we pull our soldiers' families out of our bases in Western Europe, we will be making a strong statement. If we pull them out of Germany alone, the statement will be stronger. If we significantly reduce the overall number of our forces in Europe, it will be stronger still. We will be saying that our commitment to maintaining the balance within Europe, and to keeping the peace globally, is weakening. If that is our intention, it is highly dangerous. If it is not our intention, and we go ahead anyway, it is dangerous all the more.

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The Rabbi Crisis

Jack Wertheimer

In *Bowling Alone*, his famous study of American society in the age of atomization, Robert Putnam writes that "communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America." Who would disagree? Not only do the tens of thousands of churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship dotting the landscape from coast to coast form the bedrock of American religion, but faith-based communities foster a spirit of altruism and civic engagement that disproportionately benefits society at large. It is therefore a matter of high concern that precisely when the role of churches and synagogues as "repositories of social capital" seems more important than ever, these institutions should find themselves unable to attract sufficient numbers of clergy to lead and inspire them.

The Jewish case is illustrative. Within the Jewish community, synagogues have fought for decades to win a measure of parity, in terms of both resources and respect, with the so-called secular agencies—federations of philanthropy, community centers, and community-relations organizations. For their part, these agencies have slowly come to acknowledge the critical role played by synagogues in imparting meaning to organized Jewish life in general, and in recruiting volunteers and donors for all other spheres of Jewish activity. In the language of a recent report, "the synagogue is the most prevalent and arguably the most important institution in American Jewish life." And yet this institution is now undergoing a crisis of personnel that threatens it as never before.[1]

A book published last year, Stephen Fried's *The New Rabbi*,[2] usefully chronicles the tribulations of one particular congregation, an affluent and well-established Conservative synagogue in the suburbs of Philadelphia that was seeking to replace its retiring rabbi after 30 years of service. After a national search that lasted over a year and failed to accomplish its goal, the synagogue settled on the rabbi's assistant, a man just a few years out of rabbinical school. As the book indirectly attests, what had stymied the congregation was not only a dearth of candidates but also its own uncertainty about what it was looking for. Some congregants, Fried reports, were enamored of the departing rabbi's "muscular and musical [voice], with an accent that sounded vaguely British." One was intent on finding a candidate who could match the powerful sermon given by the departing rabbi on the Sabbath after JFK's assassination in November 1963. (Or so this congregant remembered; as Fried notes, the rabbi had not actu-

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[1] In what follows, I shall be addressing myself primarily to the situation of Conservative and Reform synagogues, to which almost four-fifths of affiliated Jews belong; the Orthodox movement still forms something of an exception to the rule, but it is hardly unaffected by the forces under discussion.

[2] Bantam, 358 pp., $25.95.

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ally joined the congregation until 1969.) For still others, the search was for someone who would make the synagogue "great" for their children, or would meet their own needs in middle age and beyond.

In short, the congregation wanted a rabbi who had it all, and would do it all. And this is thoroughly typical. Fried cites a placement executive at a rabbinic organization:

> Congregations all want . . . someone who attends every meeting and is at his desk working until midnight, someone who is twenty-eight years old but has preached for thirty years, someone who has a burning desire to work with teenagers but spends all his time with senior citizens, basically someone who does *everything* well and will stay with the congregation forever.

IT WAS not ever thus. During the middle decades of the 20th century—a time, like ours, of shortages in personnel—the rabbi's position was more sharply defined, and, not coincidentally, its prestige was much higher. In those years, the era of the great national baby boom, demand exceeded supply because of the rapid proliferation of new institutions serving the religious community. The 1950's were marked by the founding of hundreds of new synagogues *every year*; it was estimated at the time that 3,000 additional rabbis and teachers were needed to educate the burgeoning ranks of Jewish children and minister to their parents.

Not only was demand for rabbis high, but so, relatively speaking, was their status. This had something to do with the particular stage of acculturation that had been reached by most American Jews, now deep into their trajectory from the inner cities to the suburbs but as yet not fully comfortable in Gentile society. Daniel Jeremy Silver, a prominent Reform rabbi who entered the profession during this period, put it as follows:

> As a clergyman, the rabbi was able to walk into a world most Jews hoped eventually to enter but as yet could not. His command of English and his university education made him a useful guide into the mysteries of the host culture. The rabbi was accorded status because he conferred status as the interpreter of the old faith to the new world and as the interpreter of the new world to a new generation of immigrants and their children.

Many American rabbis used their pulpits as platforms for engagement with national or international causes, and, in so doing, some were catapulted to prominence well beyond their congregations.

All this began to change in the mid-1970's, when the American rabbinate entered upon a period of self-doubt. Part of the gloom was occasioned by changing demographic patterns. Once the tail end of the baby-boom generation had made its way through the Jewish school system, the era of synagogue expansion came to an abrupt end and membership plummeted. Some congregations merged or folded; most remained stagnant.

As boards wrestled with the ensuing budget deficits, they began to devote far more attention to administration. Rabbis were pressed to "double up" by becoming managers of congregational affairs, engaging in fund-raising, and actively recruiting new members. These demands, in turn, forced rabbis to limit their involvement in larger communal matters, not to mention study and reflection. As the historian Michael Meyer has observed of Reform rabbis in this period, most found their "aspirations for prophetic roles . . . giving way before the performance of priestly and pastoral functions for individual congregants."

Several other developments contributed to the erosion of the rabbis' status. One was the society-wide assault on authority, of which many rabbis were simultaneously victims and initiators.[3] Catering to the newly modish disdain for formality, rabbis refashioned themselves, trading in their suits for leisure wear, abandoning the title "Rabbi Cohen" for "Rabbi Bob," and dropping formal sermons in favor of free-flowing discussion that might include an exchange of views with congregants. More critically still, many relinquished their roles as authorities in matters of Jewish religious law; to quote Daniel Jeremy Silver again, by the mid-1980's, rabbis were making "a virtue of being nonjudgmental."

A blow from a different direction came with the growth of Jewish studies in colleges and universities around the country. In a matter of decades, a whole new cadre of professionals had begun to compete with congregational rabbis as certified interpreters of Jewish texts and culture. In this competition, the title of professor inevitably outranked that of rabbi. To add to the discomfort, younger Jews joining synagogues did not share their parents' and grandparents' awe of the rabbi's learning. Many of them boasted advanced degrees of their own, and felt no need for anyone to mediate between themselves and "the mysteries" of Western culture.

By the late 70's and 80's, a palpable mood of demoralization had set in. In one survey of Reform rabbis, only a bare majority affirmed that, if they had

[3] See "Rabbis and Their Discontents" by Howard Singer in COMMENTARY, May 1985.

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it to do all over again, they would make the same choice of career.

And today? From one perspective—the demand side—conditions would seem to have improved. Ever since the late 1980's, large numbers of Jewish baby-boomers have themselves become parents and joined synagogues, and this in itself has increased the need for rabbis. Larger congregations with 1,200 or more members now employ three or four rabbis, each with responsibility for a different sub-population. Even medium-sized congregations with 500 to 800 members have an assistant rabbi.

In keeping with the rising demand, compensation has also reached impressive levels. Recently ordained rabbis with a few years of experience can expect wage-and-housing packages in the vicinity of $100,000. More experienced rabbis earn anywhere from 50- to 100-percent more, and senior rabbis in prosperous synagogues command up to $300,000.

Finally, transformations within the rabbinate itself have seemed to win the appreciation of many congregants. Most notably, all rabbinical schools except those within the orbit of Orthodoxy now ordain women; while female rabbis still have trouble landing senior positions in some large congregations, they have been successfully integrated into most sectors of the American rabbinate. (In a small number of modern-Orthodox congregations, women are also now employed in para-rabbinic roles.) More generally, as congregational rabbis have worked at becoming more approachable, their popularity with their congregants has tended to grow.

Despite these developments, however, the supply side looks very poor. The pulpit is not attracting significantly more new recruits than it did a few decades ago. Furthermore, ever growing numbers of rabbis are leaving congregational life, a process that has been abetted by the rapid expansion of other job opportunities in Jewish institutions. Ex-pulpit rabbis now serve as teachers and administrators in Jewish day schools or in Jewish community centers and summer camps, professors of Jewish studies, directors of Jewish campus programs, hospital chaplains, and officials of Jewish organizations and family foundations. Although many of these positions offer lower remuneration than the pulpit rabbinate, they hold other attractions, including more reasonable job requirements, fewer "bosses," and a clearer chain of command. Finally, anywhere from a quarter to a half of students ordained during the 1990's have eschewed congregational work altogether.[4] It is no wonder that recruitment has become a major priority at all seminaries.

The predicament is hardly unique to American Jews. The Catholic population of the United States has increased by nearly a third in recent decades, but the numbers of priests and nuns have declined by some 40 percent, while the number of seminarians has dropped well below replacement level; Protestant denominations, both mainline and evangelical, report only slightly less drastic shortages. In the meantime, those who do attend seminaries are older than their predecessors a few decades ago, and hence will serve fewer years before retirement. There has also been a decline in *quality*: in recent decades, women entering Master of Divinity programs have scored just barely above the mean on the Graduate Record Exam, while men have scored below the mean. And, just as in the Jewish experience, recent seminary graduates increasingly shun congregational work: in 1999, barely half of male seminarians and even fewer female matriculants expected to be working in congregational ministries five years down the road.

Driving this exodus from Christian congregational life are—according to various studies—such factors as the grossly unreasonable expectations placed upon ministers, low levels of denominational support, poor financial compensation, inadequate opportunities for continuing religious study and spiritual growth, and the overall feeling that the work of a minister is ineffective.

On a number of these scales, as it happens, rabbis and prospective rabbis still fare considerably better than their Christian counterparts—a fact that has not escaped the notice of those trying to rebuild the Christian ministry. Thus, a report by Auburn Seminary states with open envy that "Though their course of study is longer and their debt load higher, rabbinical students, as a group, have most of the characteristics of 'quality' that other [Christian] groups say they want." Nevertheless, the parallels between the Jewish and the Christian situations are ominous. Not only have most rabbinical seminaries come to rely increasingly on second-career students to fill their classes, and not only are declining percentages of rabbis seeking pulpit positions, but the findings of a recent study on "The Spiritual Development Needs of Mid-Career Clergy" are no less true of serving rabbis than of the Christian ministers who speak despairingly in its pages of their "loneliness, frustration with the ambiguities and stresses of the ministerial role, and a sense of never having enough time to attend to themselves, their families, and their own spiritual lives."

[4] These figures do not include graduates of Orthodox rabbinical schools, which ordain more rabbis than the rest of the Jewish community combined. Since, however, study in these schools is regarded as academic rather than professional in nature, an even lower percentage of ordained Orthodox rabbis enter the pulpit rabbinate.

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IF SECTORS of the rabbinate are demoralized, recent efforts to "improve" the American synagogue, by exacerbating the trends of 30 years ago, have made matters still worse.

Increasingly, congregational boards are drawing upon business models to rationalize the work of their institutions. As the vocabulary and expectations of corporate life come to dominate, they inevitably shape the treatment of synagogue employees as well. A few years ago, the president of a prominent Reform temple sent out an eighteen-page letter explaining why the rabbi had been let go: the letter referred to the synagogue's loss of "market share," its "spiraling deficits," and the failure of its highest paid employee to maintain his "star attraction." With the rabbi relegated to the role of manager, and success increasingly measured in quantitative terms, the deeper, religious purposes of the synagogue tend to fall by the wayside. In ignoring what rabbis themselves most value—serving as teachers of the religious tradition—and valuing what they least wish to do, the reward system virtually guarantees low rates of job satisfaction and retention.

But there is more to it than that. The decades-long erosion of authority, and of authority figures, in American culture at large has translated into an all-out assault upon "hierarchy" within the synagogue. As I noted earlier, the assault has been led partly from within. Thus, David Teutsch, the former president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, warned his colleagues several years ago to avoid "maximiz[ing] the more dramatic, awe-inspiring aspect of their role . . . rather than the more consultative, personal aspect."

Feminists have fueled this deprecation of "hierarchical" models of leadership, in some cases seeking to substitute a new and distinctly "female" approach to the rabbinate. "Women's center of focus is on people rather than principles," writes one female Reconstructionist rabbi approvingly; their goal is not "to move up, to be alone at the top, but rather . . . to connect with others, to be together at the center." Others are less sure about this—"some of us [women] are nurturing, others are not," as one puts it—but quite a few seem to agree that the very exercise of religious authority borders on the psychopathological. Here is the feminist critic Rachel Adler:

> The congregation agrees to invest the rabbi with unqualified, unique power and knowledge. The rabbi agrees to impersonate the ideal parent of childhood fantasy, who nurtures selflessly and magically ensures safety and well-being. The pact offers the rabbi a grandiose and inflated self-image. It gives the congregation an amulet to ward off personal and communal evil.

And so forth. The same anti-clerical spirit, informed by the same vastly inflated estimate of the rabbi's "unqualified, unique power," inhabits other sectors of the Jewish world as well. One journalist, for instance, and has asserted that today's rabbis are at "war" with the Jews they serve and has issued a call to arms under the title, "Taking on Our Rabbis." The past president of the World Jewish Congress, Edgar Bronfman, has urged any congregation dissatisfied with its rabbi's teachings to rise up and "fire the rabbi and get one who will do its bidding." One would hardly know from any of this that the days of the rabbi as orator and high priest are long gone, or that, when it comes to congregants' religious practice, most rabbis are, if anything, accommodating to a fault.

The truth is rather different. Thanks to the campaign against "hierarchy," rabbis have been stripped, or have stripped themselves, of their traditional prerogatives in the very area—religious principle—where those prerogatives matter most. Within many congregations, rabbis are now asked to "negotiate" over ritual matters with their own lay ritual committees, and are often overruled. It is an open secret that Reform rabbis interviewed for pulpit positions are routinely asked about their willingness to officiate at interfaith wedding ceremonies, and that an interview is likely to end abruptly should they state their opposition. The analogous situation for Conservative pulpit rabbis occurs when they are asked to officiate at celebrations—a bar or bat mitzvah or wedding—where food will be served that does not conform to Jewish dietary laws. Often it comes down to a choice between toeing the line, by compromising their convictions, and losing their job.

WHAT, THEN, is a rabbi to do? Within the profession, some have embraced or otherwise attempted to accommodate the current mood by rethinking the entire rabbinic enterprise. As one rabbi has written, a little ecstatically:

> My job is not to teach Torah. I leave that to the college professor and the Orthodox rabbi. It is my job to break heads, to smash idols, to tear down Isms that we might glimpse what Is. My job is to point the Way—the Way toward Wonder, toward Meaning, toward Meeting, toward Love. I look and share and struggle alongside those who take up the Way with me.

One might call this the rabbi as Eastern guru—less a leader in possession of a body of knowledge to be trans-

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mitted to a community of the faithful than a personal trainer in the private art of spiritual contemplation.

If that is one model, a second is the rabbi as a facilitator of change. According to this view, the radically "new era" in which American Jews find themselves requires "a pluralist and democratic environment of experimentation." Rather than trying to shape this process of experimentation, let alone bring it into conformity with traditional understandings, rabbis need to be its shepherds.

There are variations on these two notions, but underlying all of them is the same emphasis on the personal. The new Judaism revolves around the lives of individuals and families rather than around the concerns of a people: its holy days, its liturgy, its sacred texts, its collective memories. In this new Judaism, the role of the rabbi is to be a "care-giver," a hand-holder, a counselor. The relevant question becomes not how much the rabbi knows about Judaism and how effectively he instills it but how the rabbi treated me and my family at our "life-cycle" event, whether the rabbi's sermons during the High Holy Days "spoke" to me, and whether, at our last encounter, the rabbi uttered the words I needed to hear. It is a telling symptom of this privatized form of Judaism that bar-mitzvah and bat-mitzvah "services" are increasingly being held in catering halls or, if in the synagogue, at a time when only the "guests" are present, thus divorcing these occasions still further from any public or communal context.

Quite apart from the issue of what this development means for the future of Jewish religious life, one might plausibly ask whether it is working—either for congregants or for rabbis. The evidence, so far largely anecdotal, is decidedly mixed. For all the talk of "empowerment," there is clearly much dissatisfaction being expressed these days with the failure of rabbis to exercise authority. "Why haven't the rabbis stopped this?" is the all too typical complaint voiced by one father who took to a newspaper's op-ed page to express his outrage at the widespread tendency to overspend lavishly on bar-mitzvahs. His answer: for fear of offending potential donors and influential congregants, too many rabbis "leave the values issues, which is [*sic*] their domain, solely up to the families." Variants of this complaint can be heard at parent-teacher meetings in schools of every kind across the United States these days, and the syndrome they reveal is becoming a staple of social-science literature; it is hardly a surprise that they should have made their way into the world of the synagogue as well.

As for most rabbis, if the dismal recruitment and retention figures do not speak for themselves, the recent experience of the Reconstructionist movement may suggest the limits of the new spirit of democracy and egalitarianism even for its most enthusiastic proponents. Over the past few decades, the rabbis of this small but influential movement, situated on the left end of the ideological and religious spectrum, have prided themselves on their embrace of democratic norms in synagogue life. The regnant idea was of a lay-rabbinic partnership in which the rabbi would have but a single vote, like everybody else, serving the congregation as a facilitator but not as an authority or, heaven forbid, a decision-maker. Last year, however, a study commission expressed second thoughts. "When democracy is incorrectly invoked," its report concluded, "it is often experienced as disempowering and delegitimizing of [rabbinic] leadership, expertise, learning, and experience." Noting that this has "been the source of much misery to the rabbi," the executive director of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association predicted that "authority is going to flow back to rabbis."

It could happen, although it is unlikely to happen very soon. If they were truly to reassert their authoritative role, rabbis would have to adopt a much more proactive posture. Rejecting defeatist advice from among their own colleagues, they would need to gird themselves to combat the present solipsistic moment in American Judaism, reeducating their congregants to think beyond their immediate personal needs, their inchoate yearnings for "spirituality," and their consumerist notion of religious life. They would need to insist on synagogue rituals focused on communal rather than privatized concerns, and they would need to reorient the synagogue itself as an institution focused on the transcendent needs of the Jewish people. Above all, they would need to take their own role seriously, accepting the burden and the challenge of their calling as individuals who speak with authority not only for themselves but for the Jewish tradition, the Jewish people, and God.

The rewards of such an initiative would be very great. By spearheading it, rabbis would not only help to reverse some of the most debilitating recent trends within the Jewish community—trends that are sapping *every* institution of adequate support and strong leadership—but, along with clergy of other faiths, aid in reasserting the power of communities of faith to reclaim American public life in general from the depredations chronicled in *Bowling Alone* and evident all around us. Awakening an answering echo among their lay leaders and many of their congregants, they might even, in time, find their own ranks swelling. To repeat: it cannot happen overnight, but, despite the formidable obstacles, it could happen; there is everything to be gained if it does.

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Into the Void with Daniel Libeskind

Michael J. Lewis

For the past year and a half, the desolate chasm where the World Trade Center stood has been the world's most eligible building site. Developers, municipal authorities, and survivors' groups have squabbled acrimoniously over its future. Many believe that the site, having been permanently hallowed by the events of September 11, should not be sullied by speculation and commerce at all. Others, insisting that the World Trade Center was attacked precisely on account of its associations with finance capitalism, must be restored to its symbolic preeminence. Resolving these irreconcilable positions was the mandate handed to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC), which began soliciting formal architectural proposals last fall.

On February 27 of this year, after a series of false steps, the commission was finally awarded to the jaunty and eye-popping design of a team headed by Daniel Libeskind. It was a scheme with something for everyone. For those wishing to retain the void of the vanished towers as an enduring sign of grief and loss, Libeskind had left the towers' "footprint": a now deeply excavated pit with its famous concrete retaining wall. For those preferring a return to the messy business of life, he proposed nearly eight million square feet of office space in four bulky buildings. And for those wanting acrobatics on the skyline as a beacon of national defiance, he added the tallest building in the world: an angular crystalline tower whose spire would shoot to an emblematic American height of 1,776 feet.

Given the convergence of pressures in New York—the lofty financial stakes, the intensity of the historic associations, the highly conspicuous location at the very prow of Manhattan—Libeskind's work is destined to become one of the key sets of buildings of our time. But there have been other key buildings at other times. The Escorial Palace outside Madrid splendidly conveys the implacable ruthlessness of imperial Spain, the Victor Emmanuel monument in Rome the swagger and bombast of Italy at the moment of national unification, the Millennium Dome in London the obsessive marketing of Tony Blair's "Cool Britannia." Each of these buildings embodies its age with peculiar clarity, saying something that could not have been expressed in any other medium but architecture; and each in its own way is dreadful. The same can be said of the original World Trade Center towers. Libeskind's complex will easily be a wonder of the modern world; whether or not it will be any good is another question.

On the face of it, it would be difficult to find someone with better credentials for this commission than the architect of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, built between 1988 and 1999 and similarly devoted to the themes of grief and memory. The

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Jewish Museum is a difficult work, grounded in a highly abstract theoretical program that is deeply perplexing to visitors. Nonetheless, it launched Libeskind's career and made him an international celebrity. Since then, he has enjoyed a stream of prestigious public commissions, particularly museums: the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, England; an addition to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; and the Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Each is indebted to the example of the Berlin museum, combining irregular and angular geometry without, disorienting spatial sequences within, and overlaid with a heavy dose of theory.

In a still larger sense, Daniel Libeskind's entire life has prepared him for this latest commission. His successive homes—Poland, Israel, the United States, and Germany, where he moved shortly after its reunification—are a roll call of modern history. Libeskind was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1946, emigrating with his family to Israel in the late 1950's. At the age of seven he began playing the accordion, and prepared for a musical career. In the 1960's he moved to the United States, becoming a citizen in 1965 and abandoning music to study architecture. He graduated from New York's Cooper Union in 1970, and later studied architectural theory at Essex University in England.

Libeskind came to architecture at a fateful moment. The assumption that modern architecture was a rational enterprise of high moral seriousness—and that strictly functionalist architecture was the imperative of the age—was being challenged from all sides. Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* (1965) attacked high modernism both for its starkness and for its blithe disregard of context and history; Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) assailed the grim results of modern urban design. Out of these attacks there emerged a lively critique of modernism itself, the collapse of whose authority and prestige was a central fact for young architects of Libeskind's vintage.

For many of these young architects, modernism came to be replaced by postmodernism, or neotraditionalism of one kind or another. Libeskind, however, seems to have had nothing but contempt for this impulse, which he disparaged as aiming for "the picturesque and the artificial." Instead, he drifted into the camp of those seeking to preserve at least the formal elements of high modernism: geometric rigor, clarity of form, rationality. Their ideas coalesced in a group whose nickname, "the Whites," signaled its devotion to a monochrome asceticism and a self-conscious pursuit of purity. Richard Meier, the architect of the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, may be the best known member of the group.

But if the formal elements of modernism—the devices of LeCorbusier and Mies van der Rohe—survived, the principles of rationality informing those devices soon turned arcane, self-absorbed, and positively irrational. Another name given to the movement was Deconstruction, a pun that well captured the twin predilections of some of its members (especially those congregated in schools of architecture) for fashionable French literary theory and for buildings that "undid" the expectations one brought to them. Typical of these was the Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio, designed by Peter Eisenman, with its notorious stairs that lead nowhere.

ONE OTHER, somewhat contradictory, element seems to have gone into Libeskind's intellectual pedigree as well, and that is the revolutionary spirit that raged through Cooper Union after 1968. For a brief moment, architecture seemed susceptible of the same sort of ecstatic transformation then being promised by radical politics. Many students drew inspiration from the flamboyantly anarchic Archigram group, whose journal was an indescribable mixture of the psychedelic manifesto and the comic book. In its pages there unfolded such winsome architectural absurdities as Ron Herron's "Walking City," a world in which great lumbering nomadic cities wandered about in search of a place to lie down. Others envisioned "Instant Cities" that would be deployed from the air, or "Plug-in Cities" that could be distributed along the seabed.

These designs were not intended to be built—indeed, they were unbuildable. Their purpose, instead, was to mock the prim humorlessness of modernism. They embodied that ephemeral 1960's belief that all social order was a hypocritical sham, kept up at great strain, and that if one could just tap the hammer at the right spot, the whole flimsy edifice would collapse like so much stage scenery, and joyous anarchy would reign. This now-quaint conviction is what makes so many movies and books of that era seem psychologically inaccessible today.

Such, at any rate, was the mixed architectural pedigree of Daniel Libeskind. Following his graduation from Cooper Union, he chose not to move into private practice and the hardscrabble of clients and commissions but opted instead for an academic career, taking up a series of teaching positions. This had the effect of reinforcing the abstract and intellectual strands of his temperament while also depriving him of the maturing, even humbling, experience of having to deal with actual clients, of being

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forced to defend his ideas against opposition, or of developing a sense of architecture as a business.

Rather than embodying his ideas in steel and glass, Libeskind poured his energy into imaginary architecture. In 1979, he produced a series of obsessively intricate drawings he called *Micromegas*, dense arrays of overlapping axes, planes, and angles accompanied by an equally dense text. As with the Archigram group, Libeskind's quarrel seemed to be with rationality, if not with reason itself. As one typically abstruse passage went: "The invisible ground from which it is possible to scaffold moving layers of construction enables one to recover modes of awareness quite removed from the initial hypothesis of rationality." But if what he was proposing with these "moving layers of construction" was an emancipation from rationality, the form it took was not the voluptuous abandon of the Baroque, or of the hippies, but a kind of rectilinear St. Vitus's dance of broken axes and angles.

Libeskind soon took to accompanying his suites of conceptual drawings with rambling narratives that were themselves thoroughly surrealistic. An example from *Chamberworks* (1983):

> A robot—always enthralling when feeble—cannot fall over while in motion, for it resides in Byzantium, flapping at its trap door. Though attached to a military partner, stabilized around the hardened feeler by a rotor, a robot resembles an addict habitually biting his cheek or a schizophrenic reacting to the rectilinear movement of tsetse flies caged *sans culotte*.

A little of this goes a long way, but Libeskind was able to churn out page upon self-indulgent page. Although it may seem unfair to pick on such juvenile effusions, Libeskind's later and more serious theorizing cannot always be distinguished from them.

THE LOVE of unbuildable architecture did put Libeskind in some good company. From Piranesi to Archigram, fantasy has indisputably helped to reinvigorate the field, serving as a goad to what it might become. Piranesi's *Carceri*, mournful etchings of prison interiors, taught a generation of neoclassicists the poetry of space and shadow. But what is striking in Libeskind's case is how insistently he would try to translate his drawings *directly* into actual buildings. His plan for the Jewish Museum is an example.

Libeskind won this career-making commission in 1988 with a submission of considerable cockiness: his description of the project had been typed onto sheets of musical paper. The museum itself, an addition to an already existing Baroque building, he treated as a linear zigzag of eleven separate angled sections of varying lengths; the longest of these sections featured a run of stairs cumbersomely labeled the Stair of Continuity.

Libeskind accounted for his zigzag composition in the most esoteric terms: the fragmented lines, he wrote, were "the history of Berlin which can only be experienced as the absence of time and as the time fulfillment of what is no longer there." But once he won the competition, a much simpler reading emerged: "I plotted an irrational matrix that would yield reference to the emblematics of a compressed and distorted star—the yellow star that was so frequently worn on this site." Why he originally suppressed this explicitly Jewish allegory remains unclear. But in any case he had struck upon a winning formula, which was to throw a cloak of rarefied theoretical sophistication over symbolism of the most blatant and even kitschy sort.

Libeskind's "irrational matrix," with its anguished geometry, produces an unusually discomfiting and distressing experience for the visitor to the Berlin museum. The exterior metal-clad walls are slashed at capricious angles to create long, narrow windows whose shape and placement have nothing to do with the levels and divisions of the spaces within. As for those interior spaces, they are of an unrelieved austerity, and they also refuse to congeal, forming instead a sequence of progressive dissonances. The culmination of the visitor's journey is the building's terrifying dead end, which Libeskind called the Holocaust Void and which he treated as a tall and narrow concrete well, over eighty feet in height, unheated and unlit except for a single thin aperture. For Libeskind, this space is not technically part of the museum because it has nothing to exhibit; instead, it presents "that which can never be exhibited when it comes to the Jewish Berlin history. Humanity reduced to ashes."

Nor is that the end of the histrionics. Had Libeskind limited himself to the Holocaust Void, he might have been credited with at least *reaching* for a kind of sublimity. But, in a characteristic move, he went for overkill. Outside the museum, on a disorienting slope, he created an "upside-down garden" consisting of a grid of 49 square piers of concrete. On these piers, over twenty feet high, have been hoisted plants that can be neither seen nor enjoyed. Whatever tragic tone Libeskind may have succeeded in establishing by means of the mute and frightening chamber within is thoroughly undercut by this contrived showing of "that which can never be exhibited." Here the irrational matrix meets the theme park, and the theme park wins.

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LIBESKIND'S ROUTE to the World Trade Center commission was rather fortuitous. Soon after September 11, the developer Larry Silverstein, who holds the lease on the site, had proposed four 50-story towers to take the place of the destroyed buildings. Thinking along the same lines, the LMDC commissioned a planning study in the spring of 2002.* It wanted to review possible solutions for developing the site in discrete phases over a period of time—a critical issue, given the enormous costs of the project as well as New York's glut of office space. But the unveiling of the ensuing designs in July 2002 was a public-relations disaster.

Six different groupings were shown, with the buildings represented in schematic, block-like terms with few details. Such simplification is normal enough when general questions of massing and layout are being considered, but here it backfired. The planning studies were taken literally, leading to fears of a drab and dispiriting clutch of towers.

The public uproar had a dramatic effect, pushing the LMDC in the opposite direction: toward extravagance and flamboyance. Former mayor Rudolph Giuliani, exercising his great moral authority, not only rejected the first designs decisively but insisted that "a very substantial portion [of the site] should be dedicated to a memorial, particularly the footprints." Thanks in great part to his repeated calls for leaving the site alone, public sentiment began to crystallize around the notion that the 200-foot-square foundations of the buildings must remain inviolable.

This restriction imposed a burden on the architectural competition that followed in the fall of 2002. With the footprints, located at the very center of the sprawling sixteen-acre plaza, having been effectively banned from use, any new buildings would have to be pushed to the perimeter, squeezed hard against their neighbors. Nor was this the only burden. Normally, an architectural program is the written expression of a client's detailed needs; the more specific the brief—and the more assertive the client—the better the resulting building is likely to be. But in the case of the World Trade Center there was no single client: neither Larry Silverstein nor the LMDC had the authority to act unilaterally.

The result was a mandate of exceptional sketchiness. In the absence of detailed guidelines, the demand to preserve the original footprints, together with the stated requirement that "a restored skyline will provide a significant, identifiable symbol for the residents of the metropolitan area," became the linchpin of the architectural program.

Some 400 submissions were received in the fall, and last December the LMDC singled out seven firms as finalists. So far had it traveled in the direction of extravagance and innovation that several of the entries did not look like buildings at all. A consortium of architects headed by Richard Meier, for example, proposed a superblock of three interconnected verticals and horizontals that formed an odd tic-tac-toe board in the sky. THINK architects—another consortium, this one headed by Rafael Vinoly—commemorated the vanished towers by means of two great lattices, within whose open framework other spaces and objects could be suspended; connecting the two lattices was a bridge at the exact location where the two planes struck, thus creating a monument to the crime rather than a memorial to its victims.

Some flickers of elegance also made their way into the list of finalists. The distinguished British architect Norman Foster, who spent an inordinate amount of time designing plausible, well-detailed buildings, offered a pair of wonderfully tapered and graceful towers that gently touched each other in the sky. But his design was ultimately rejected, and so was the one proposal that eschewed gestures of self-importance altogether. This was the two 55-story towers presented by the small New York firm of Peterson and Littenberg: gently updated Art-Deco essays that were widely jeered for their lack of imagination and courage.

In the *New York Times*, Herbert Muschamp ridiculed the Peterson-Littenberg design as offering a "portrait of a city with low self-esteem, a New York that has stopped believing, . . . [and] as dated as disco." In fact, however, Peterson and Littenberg had been the only competitors bold enough to defy the program. They alone saw that a human space could not be created as long as the inhuman scale of the original World Trade Center plaza survived. Instead, they daringly reconnected the street grid that had been lost in 1969, working to integrate the site into the life of the city. Best was a tree-lined promenade that ran along West Street and south to the Battery. At the north they placed their new towers, dominating a landscaped park where the old towers once stood. Here were subtlety, scale, and a will to heal a wounded city—a welcome exercise in restraint and reticence that was, however, precisely the wrong note to strike for the LMDC.

The almost universal repudiation of the Peterson-Littenberg proposal highlighted the intellectual

* By then, a large number of unsolicited designs had also been widely displayed, including some by international celebrities of the architectural world. For a discussion, see my "Visions of Ground Zero" in the April 2002 COMMENTARY.

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poverty of the tacit decision to hold the entire site hostage to the "sacred ground" of the vanished buildings. Clearance and excavation had swept the site clean of any physical remains of the towers or their inhabitants. To venerate this area as a graveyard, now that the actual graveyard was the distant landfill where the debris of the buildings was being meticulously sifted for human remains, was akin to venerating the chalk outline of a body on a sidewalk. It was certainly true that the singular nature of the 2,700 deaths had brought special interest to that same outline. But why not treat it architecturally, then? The massacre of September 11, a three-dimensional event taking place in the air and then violently projected downward into two dimensions, was itself, in some sense, an architectural fact, to which it might well have been appropriate to invite an architectural solution. But the absence of any clear consensus, religious or philosophical, about the meaning of those horrible events made it next to impossible to disentangle reverence from sentimentality, the solemn from the ghoulish, dooming the competition process to incoherence and worse.

ENTER LIBESKIND. Not that he of the irrational matrix was about to untangle anything. Reflecting his belief that "we cannot obliterate the traumatic nature of the event, and the trauma is here to stay," his design left the entire excavated area as a submerged memorial, dominated by the mighty "slurry wall" to the west. To the north and east of this void he grouped four sharply angular towers, their tops sliced at rakish angles.

As at the Jewish Museum, a trio of easily digested symbols made the hermetic geometry palatable: a void in a submerged plaza, an excessively elevated garden (here lodged in the 1,776-foot spire), and a commemorative object (here a Wedge of Light rather than a Stair of Continuity). Once again, symbolism came to the very brink of bathos; having renounced the tyranny of Euclidean geometry, Libeskind decked his design in patriotic American numerology. (He seems not to be aware of how stale the gesture was; a much-cited example of Victorian sentimentalism is the hall of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, deliberately made 1,876 feet long.)

As at the Jewish Museum, too, one allegory stumbled over the next. Libeskind's peculiarly faceted towers were precisely aligned with the course of the sun, so that on the anniversary of September 11, light would fall on the sunken plaza. From 8:46 to 10:28 a.m.—the interval between the first attack and the collapse of the second building—"the sun will shine without shadow, in perpetual tribute to altruism and courage."

Improbably aligning cosmology and uplift, Libeskind's brainy, sappy project rose to the head of the pack. On February 4, the seven finalists were winnowed down to two: Libeskind, and Vinoly's pair of skeletal lattices. In fact, there was no contest. Over the next weeks, the critics lined up to laud Libeskind's scheme, from Ada Louise Huxtable in the *Wall Street Journal* to Marvin Trachtenberg, an architectural historian at the prestigious Institute of Fine Arts, in the *New York Times*. Only the *Times*'s architecture critic, Herbert Muschamp, stumped for Vinoly to the end. On February 27, Libeskind's victory was announced to only subdued dissent. Three weeks later, the LMDC announced that he would also oversee nearly all of the commercial-development projects at the site.

IN RETROSPECT, it is clear enough why Libeskind's work, exceptionally thin in range and character, should have endeared itself over the years to his various clients, all of whom inhabit the world of cultural institutions: museums, schools, and foundations. He himself is most at home in that world, and until recently has inhabited it exclusively. He speaks its language. If his designs struck any of his potential clients as dangerously unhinged, reassurance was always at hand in the form of his impeccable institutional credentials, his professorial demeanor, his high-flown patter.

Libeskind has come along, moreover, at a time when many cultural institutions are themselves pathologically nervous about their own aims and purposes. The custodians of these institutions—curators, professors, philanthropic executives—are everywhere to be heard expressing doubts about the worth of the culture they represent, about the criteria of quality and of meaning they are charged with upholding, even about the validity of Western civilization. They are the last people in the world equipped to distinguish a philosopher from a poseur—especially if, as is inevitably the case, the latter presents himself in a more poised and sincere manner than the former. Add to all this, in the case of the World Trade Center, the divided nature of administrative authority, the overwhelming public pressure, and the confusion over the actual program the buildings were to carry out, and a boondoggle was all but foreordained.

That is the final tragedy of the story. What ought to have been a healing civic act will instead end in a crass and opportunistic jumble, a congeries of fractured forms decorated with arbitrary, crowd-pleasing flourishes and rationalized in the intimidating and thoroughly inhumane gobbledygook of the academy. A wounded city deserved much better.

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Adult Fiction

A Story

John J. Clayton

FRANKLY, I don't see much difference between what sits on the fiction shelves of my bookstore and what walks in the door. In a vacation town way out on the Cape, you expect ragged, you expect half-dressed—and hey, there is that: baggy bathing suit holding hands with skimpy bathing suit, psychoanalyst on vacation wearing a Viagra tee shirt for a gag. Beat up and informal, my customers, like some books I've got, well-wrecked, covers lost, illustrations and layouts that seemed fresh and hip back in the 60's. But ragged and out of date isn't what I mean. I'm thinking of how people walk around the store as if they were inhabitants of the novels and plays I sell. You can see it in the elegant ways they mispronounce *Baudrillard* or *mise en scène* or *gemeinschaft*, the trill or growl of an *r*, the nasal vowel, little signs to indicate how at home they are in my United Nations of literature. And even more so in their swaggers and slumps, the way a simple question can open a whole address book of miserable relationships.

Or the things they say to the lover or husband or child they come in with. Say it's a gray day, which is when I do my best business, and here they are, paying $2,000 a week for sun and sunsets, and my shop has become a device of desperation between an overpriced lunch and the galleries of seascape art. So they come in, wet, their eyes glancing everywhere, loathing the store, looking at everything with hunger and disgust, and the drama begins.

"Haven't you brought enough books already?" he says, or she says, drawing out the gruff "*ough*," knowing the answer. Saying: I despise you for wandering around killing time till dinner, making me aware of my own emptiness; this was supposed to be a vacation. Me, I keep my eyes lowered, I'm not listening. I picture them in bed, each with a book and a pencil and a reading light, counting the nights since they made love and checking their inner clocks and deciding yes, and then one turns to the other and cocks an eyebrow and the other puffs out the lip as if in deliberation—and nods. But today they cannot stand one another, at least until each of them lights upon a soothing shelf, old cookbooks or books of sailing instruction or a giant book of Renaissance art, and sits down on one of the simple Shaker chairs I've scattered around, nice to look at but not so cozy that you'd want to sit all afternoon.

Or a young woman with unkempt black hair twisted into yarn by salt and rain comes in and wants something on raising a Jewish child, maybe she's heard I've got a nice Judaica department, and I see the swell of her belly and right then and there I love her very much and want to give her a comfortable chair, a cushion, and I run around looking

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for books for her, basically *feed* her, you know? And I love the child she's going to have, and she tells me about her husband, who's an intern at Lenox Hill hospital in New York, and we laugh: how busy the two of them will be in a couple of months. And here's a nice book, almost new, on being a Jewish parent, and I take a couple of dollars off the price. And as long as she's here, I write down the names of other books I know, and I talk to her about Abraham Joshua Heschel.

Nice! I feel my blessing go out to this young family, and because she feels it, too, and because I seem avuncular (well, I'm almost fifty), she tells me about her prune of a mother-in-law, nothing's ever good enough, and how badly she wants to do everything right. And I know she won't, and I tell her she will. Easy to feel openhearted talking to this young person with the beautiful stringy hair; less easy when I come home and the two of us, Ruth and me, we go at it. But that's neither here nor there. In the meantime, a couple of months, we laugh, how busy they'll be. . . .

A couple of months? A couple of months later is the middle of September 2001, and all the hospitals in New York are on 24-hour alert.

BUT AS I was saying, it's always amazing to me how life displays itself there in my shop. Like one particular morning, August 2001, I'm behind the counter checking lists on the Internet from used-book consortiums, and this man, a little younger than I am, thinner, nice-looking, comes in, no suntan, city pants, a cap with a long peak but no logo, and as he browses I feel sadness cloaking him like an emanation. It's no surprise to me that he's looking for the Judaica section, and when he finds it and tilts his head to scan the titles I go up to him. "This is my specialty. Can I help?"

"I'm looking," he says, "for Jewish books on mourning."

I'm dying to say, That's something you have to learn? But I keep my mouth shut. I know what he means, pull out Wieseltier's *Kaddish*, find him others on ritual practice, and he chooses one and follows me to the counter.

"If you don't mind my asking—?"

"My mother. She was in a nursing home in New Jersey."

"I'm sorry. May you be comforted."

He puts his hands to his cheeks and starts to rock—not big, the way some Jews do when they pray, but little, so you have to look closely to see. This goes right to my heart. How many people can express themselves so directly?

"How old was your mother?"

"Old. Not so old: going on eighty. But for a few years she was more and more . . . somewhere else. Sometimes she remembered my name."

"So, you sat shiva?"

"Last week. Then—well, we had this vacation place paid for, so we came. God knows why. Not much of a vacation. And I can't say kaddish."

This, I was waiting for. "You've come to the right place."

"They told me."

"Ah." It's not a big town, everybody knows Lenny Lensky. In a way, I'm the town Jew. Sure, there are a lot of Jews on the Cape, but they come and go. To *daven* in a traditional way, you've got to go all the way to Hyannis. And you need ten adult Jews if you want to say kaddish. That's the way it is. And it makes sense, because, remember, the kaddish is a prayer by the community, it's really just a congregation praising God; it doesn't even mention death. In the midst of loss, we praise the Holy One.

But, okay, you need ten Jews, a minyan. So here's what I do. Somebody comes in who needs to say kaddish, I make a couple of calls, I go out on the street—we're right on the main drag—and I've got this signboard, two signboards connected by a chain back to back, it makes a tall isosceles triangle, and on each board I pin a giant sign in Magic Marker:

JEWS!

MOURNER NEEDS MINYAN

TO SAY KADDISH!

PLEASE COME IN!

"So you think it's really possible?"

"Certainly it's possible. *Please*. What's your name? I'm Lenny."

"Howard Rose."

"Lenny Lensky. I'll make a couple of calls. You watch. It's interesting." And it is. So I make my calls and check the passersby. Every couple of minutes I spot a Jew, or a Jewish family, or a young man I'm almost sure about, or a young woman in a bathing suit. For some mourners, a woman doesn't count for making up a minyan. Others aren't particular. As far as I'm concerned, man, woman, a Jew is a Jew. But it's up to the mourner. For Howard, it's got to be men.

"Watch," I say, as a big athletic guy reads the sign. He's pushing a stroller. He reads and turns away, eyeing the other side of the street. Like: *Who, me?* If I see the shoulders getting guilty—I'm fluent in the language of shoulders—I'm not above

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calling out, "Hey! Excuse me, do you happen to be Jewish?"

A direct question like that, they have to say yes, and I go, "Can you come in just for ten minutes?" And often they do. Maybe I'm fibbing when I say ten minutes, but it's not too much more than fifteen.

I let this young father off the hook because my regulars haven't arrived. In another five, ten minutes, here they are—Rudy, Jack, Stan, each in his own car. That's five of us already. Then a kid off the street, eager, and a gay couple, that's eight, and now I put the RELIGIOUS SERVICE GOING ON—I'LL OPEN IN A FEW MINUTES sign on the door, and David Samuels arrives, beautifully dressed, a jeweler, pretty rich. We pull the chairs up against a cupboard at the back that's covered with a red velvet cloth. Here's the small Torah scroll I own. For some people, nine Jews plus a Torah is sufficient. For others, no. For Howard, no. But I'm positive we'll get another—and sure enough, we're mumbling through *ashrei* when another Jew arrives, a tourist in shorts, sunburned, florid, floods of white hair in a pony tail. "Shalom."

I hand out yarmulkes and prayer books, and we *daven* among the books. Howard gets to say kaddish; also Jack Schwartz, for his brother. I open a bottle of schnapps, pour a little for each of us. *L'hayyim*. Now, as long as the store is still closed, a little before noon, I take in my signboards, put the CLOSED FOR LUNCH sign on the door, and say, "Howard? How about some Chinese food? Almost kosher."

The Chinese restaurant I lead him to used to be a pizza parlor; it's just down the street, past a couple of tchotchke shops and a store for women's beachwear. I don't know why I asked for Howard's company. Maybe I figure he needs some human contact. I ask about children. No, he says, it looks like they won't be blessed. They've thought of adopting. "But we're not so young anymore."

"Younger than me," I say. The restaurant is muggy with damp and with cooking oils.

I'm grinning inside. I enjoy inflicting surprises. Not that the food is a surprise—it's a B-plus—but ah, the fortune cookie! He breaks it open without glancing. "So? What does it say?" I ask.

The place is getting crowded with vacationers depressed over the weather. Howard looks at the slip, does a classic double-take—Abbot and Costello couldn't have done it better. He reads: "May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." He looks up at me. Now, he laughs. Other patrons turn around. It's good to see: a nice laugh, his whole long face seems to expand, the eyes get into it. He breathes and the shoulders heave.

I hold up my hands in surrender, "okay, okay," and I call out, "Jack?" From the restaurant kitchen, wrapped in a stained white cooking apron, comes our other mourner, Jack Schwartz, laughing. He's been waiting to make his appearance. "What is it? You find something wrong with the food?"

Howard sticks his hand out; Jack wipes his hand on his apron and shakes. "May you also be comforted," Howard says.

So I can see he's a mentsh. He's okay. I imagine his repressor wife at the house, complaining he's down in the dumps; you can go stir crazy in a rental in lousy weather. I hear her saying, "Why did your mother have to die just before we were supposed to go on vacation? It was just like her." A time like this, a mourner shouldn't be left alone to brood. He should be in a community. I say, "Howard, I've got to get back. You and your wife, you want to join us for a simple mid-week dinner?"

THIS MAYBE wasn't such a good idea. "What are you doing inviting people off the street?" Ruth says over the phone.

"A mourner."

"Len, think how many mourners there are on the Cape. Why don't you just invite them all?"

"From Brooklyn. A Jew."

"I'm supposed to entertain people from Brooklyn I don't even know?"

She makes *Brook*lyn sound like milk gone sour. I tell her, "*I'm* from Brooklyn." "Yes," she says snidely, "I know," and hangs up.

Ruth is all right. She can't help it. She came from the wrong side of the river. I'm kidding. But you see, we take turns. Sometimes she's the compassionate one and I'm the tough guy, especially when it comes to her women friends. Today, she's the begrudging one. It may mean she had a bad morning. She writes young-adult fiction, pretty successful: I've got a Ruth Stern-Lensky shelf in the store for her remainders. She also writes adult fiction, but so bleak no publisher will go near it.

Late in the afternoon, she picks up Gabe from the day-camp bus. I'm hoping that by the time I arrive home, fish and vegetables in hand and a bottle of good white wine to sweeten her disposition, it won't need sweetening. But coming in I see right away there's trouble. Marriage! Worlds upon worlds, such a mystery—no one has ever been able to name it. I come in the back door and see she's got the table set in our big farm kitchen and she's peeling a cucumber, itself a Sign.

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Of what? It could mean she wants to share in the evening. But no, she knows I'll be doing the cooking. What she wants is to be able to say later on, You see? This was an imposition.

She starts in on Gabe. "Gabe, sweetie . . . ." Oh, I hate that sweetie business. "Gabe, sweetie, you haven't finished your practicing. Don't let your father distract you."

How do people ever get past this? At times we do. It's like being in a city full of chemical odors, exhausts, ozone, cooking smells, and suddenly lifted by a giant seagull to the top of a dune on the Cape, clear night air, the sea you can hardly see, just points of light below. It happens. Moments of clarity, Ruthie and me, the hum of the blood, everything alive and One and all the bad stuff is foolish and unreal, we brew it in the hot vat of our psyches.

Not tonight. She looks at me. "Are you going to wear that shirt?"

Oh, my God. One of those nights. I look in the dining-room mirror. I sigh. She's right, the shirt is halfway out of my pants, it's stained from book jackets, a button's gone. I'm not a movie star, I have to tell you. A little overweight, a little random you might say, as if the parts of my face, like my nose, were kind of stuck on. A little soft, a little casual—all right, sloppy, let's get down to it. I've had success with women—not since my marriage to Ruthie, you understand, God forbid. But I'm not totally disgusting.

Ruth is ten years younger, neat as a pin, runs two miles a day, wears two-piece bathing suits. God knows she's pretty. And Gabe takes after her. Another blessing, our major blessing, our major accomplishment these twelve years.

So I change my shirt, and then she makes me put on an apron. I listen to Gabe playing a little piece from the Anna Magdalena Bach notebook, and then I let him help do the cooking on the gas grill out on the brick terrace. "We can have drinks outside," she says, looking up at the sky. Weather's blown out to sea; we may even get a sunset. Ruth puts the wine in an ice bucket, sets out appetizers, so I know she's been shopping as a supplement. The appetizers say, You see?

"That was very thoughtful of you," I say. "Fixing things up so nice." But she isn't buying my soft soap. She spreads Saran Wrap over the plate to keep off the bugs and Gabe. "The man's name is Howard," I say.

"What does he do . . . in *Brook*lyn?"

"I forgot to ask. I don't know that he works in Brooklyn. Maybe he works in Manhattan. When someone's in mourning. . . ."

She checks her watch. She doesn't particularly want the mourner and his wife, but she wants to ascertain if they're late so she can get critical.

BUT THEY'RE not late, or only a few minutes. I'm relieved (because of Ruthie) that they're not in shorts or tourist shirts. Both are dressed for an evening out, nice slacks, nice shirt, and she's wearing a white linen skirt, long, over pretty sandals, not beach shoes. She's in sun glasses, takes them off when she shakes my hand, puts them on again. I can see she's a kind person, not like my fantasy of the grim repressor. Her name's Louisa. Remember what I said about the young mother-to-be, how I fell instantly in love, took her and her family-to-be into my heart? Not Louisa. This is a grown-up, plain-looking, nothing to delude myself about. She has a job, maybe she's an accountant? She has a hobby, maybe birding? I'm not impressed.

We walk out on the terrace, and I'm wondering, was I crazy? Why did I want to make a big production for these strangers? But the late sunlight could almost take your breath away as it hits the garden, steam rising as the evening dries.

"Howard *Rose*?" Ruth says when I introduce them. We all sit down around the wrought-iron table. She can't keep her eyes off him—it's getting slightly embarrassing. "*Howard Rose?* You didn't grow up in New York, on the West Side? Near the Museum of Natural History?"

"I did. Yes. Right. We live in Brooklyn Heights now. From upstairs we have a marvelous view of lower Manhattan."

"You don't remember me? Ruth *Stern*?"

He does another double-take. "Oh, my. Of course I remember you. Ruth Stern!"

And he does. They went to the same private school. They went out together in their teens. "Remember the place we used to go to down in the Village?"

"Bruno's. Of course."

"Your family and my family—we were both at the Jewish Center on 86th Street." And suddenly she's silent, her face freezes. "Oh, Howard—and so it's your mother? Mrs. Rose? Rebecca Rose? Oh, I loved your mother. She was so wonderful to me."

And my Ruth is in tears, and Howard is in tears, and Howard's wife, Louisa, and I, we look at each other and don't know what to say. You see what I mean I don't find much difference between what's on my shelves and what walks in the door? Here's a coincidence right out of a 19th-century novel. Those guys loved coincidence. "Here," I say, pour-

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ing wine, "we should drink to the memory of Howard's mother."

They don't even hear. But Louisa and I tap glasses, and at the tapping, Ruth and Howard, turn, take up their glasses, drink—and turn right back to talking.

"I'm a literary agent," Howard says.

"An agent," she says. "I've been thinking about changing agents." And they're off again, remembering, or flirting, or negotiating; checking each other out. Gabe comes in, and his mother is the one to introduce him. She holds Gabe between her knees and says, "This is a man I knew when I was just a little older than you. Our families belonged to the same *shul*. We went to high school together. Oh, Howard, your mom. . . ."

I check the salmon on the grill. I go back to the kitchen to warm the rice in the microwave; when I walk outside again and they're still reminiscing, I see I'll have to talk to Howard's wife. "So," I begin, "and what do *you* do?"

"I'm a neurologist," she says. "I teach post-docs at Rockefeller."

"I see," I say, abashed.

"And you're a book dealer? That was very kind of you this morning."

And Ruthie's saying, "This man's mom used to make cookies for me, Gabe. Chocolate chip. You know the recipe I make for you sometimes? That's her recipe. Oh, Howard, and she was so *funny*. So . . . droll. I remember walking down Broadway, the three of us, and she kept up a narrative, a patter, describing all the characters. We rolled our eyes at her *shtick*—but we laughed. She took me on an antiwar march. On Broadway. My own mother was furious."

I bring the fish and vegetables from the grill. Louisa and I talk about our view of the bay; a tall sloop heads out to sea. But I'm listening. "That's my mother," Howard says. "I mean, you see, *that's* the mother I'm mourning. Louisa never knew her. The woman my wife knew, these past eight years"—now, as if it dawns on him, *Ach, my wife is right here*, he calls to her, "Louisa, it's just the way it is, she was incontinent and senile and took a lot of my attention. It's hard to mourn for that Rebecca Rose. This is amazing for me, you being here to remember with me."

They're nodding together. Ruthie's not a weeper; but she's got tears in her eyes. They both do.

Louisa leans over, places her hand on Howard's hand. She pats, she pats. Then, leaving them alone again, she says to me, as if they were somewhere else, "I do get it, I get what Howard's going through. I never knew her, but I know Howard." And me, I think about my own mother, gone fifteen years now. And I want to go call my father in Florida.

Instead I call everybody together for dinner. We take our wine glasses and move inside. "A wonderful house," Louisa says.

We all talk together during dinner. He thanks me again. I say, "Making a minyan, Howard, you've got to understand—I do it for me. The Cape is beautiful, but it's a kind of exile."

After dinner, we move to the living room, what in the 18th century was the kitchen, broad pine flooring and paneled walls. Howard and Ruth sit on the hearthstone of the gigantic fireplace we never use. Their knees are almost touching, and they're talking non-stop. Even with my big sonar ears straining, I can't hear what they're saying, so I talk to Louisa about recipes for fish, about their congregation in Brooklyn.

Why am I straining? Because, frankly, I usually don't see Ruthie this way. Look at her! Wistful. Vulnerable. She saves wistful and vulnerable for her young-adult fiction. If you want to go on a ten-mile, heavy-breathing hike up a mountain in a cold drizzle, take Ruthie along. No complaints from my wife. But she's sitting with Howard and holding on to Gabe tonight, holding his hand for dear life. Holding her child self? I don't know this woman. I wish I did. I see how soft and pretty this little girl was. Losses? Well, me, too. I remember as a kid in Brooklyn going with my father to services Saturday morning, then shmoozing with the neighbors, door to door, eating cookies in honor of the Sabbath. Me as a child; Ruthie.

Finally I catch a word and, faking a laugh, pick it up, run with it over to their side of the room. Louisa has no choice; she follows. "It's really something," I say, "your meeting again like this. Howard, here's what the Chinese fortune cookie should have said: 'You'll meet someone from your past who can comfort you the way no minyan of strangers can.'"

He smiles. "No, no. It's a different thing. Ruth was practically a cousin."

A cousin, huh? I feel like telling him, You know, Mister, this is not so polite of you. I pull together a minyan, I bring a guy home, it's not nice to play kneesies with my wife. Worse: to change her face this way. There's a long history of guys messing around with the rules of guest and host. Look at what Menelaus did when Paris took off with Helen. The result? A ten-year war and a great poem.

But that was an epic, I remind myself; this is a not-so-hot novel straight from my shelves.

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And we talk some more, and the long looks seem to stop between them. It grows dark on the bay, lights from fishing boats, lights marking the long curve of Cape Cod, the glimmering from P-town. And Louisa says, "Why don't you drop in on us when you're in New York?" And Howard says, "Please come see us." Oh, we will, I tell them. He thanks me again for the minyan, and I notice he doesn't ask about making another one for him while he's on the Cape. I figure that's the end of it, goodbye.

BUT AFTER that night things will never be the same. I look at my wife; Ruthie's face seems sadder. I come in one day, she's on the phone, and from the abrupt way she puts down the receiver, I know, I don't even have to check caller ID when she goes for a shower. But I do.

The rest of the summer she's walking around inside a story. Here's the story: Someone from my youth, he can help me reclaim the Ruth that got lost. So just after Labor Day, the Cape quiet, most of the tourists gone, she tells me, "Len, do you mind if I go down to New York for a few days? I'd like to get back to—God, you know—civilization. Go to a couple of museums, maybe see my agent."

Why not?

"You don't mind? You and Gabe will be all right?"

Oh, sure. Sure.

So she makes her plans, and I could tell you word for word the story she's in, I could pull it off the shelf. She's walking around in a daydream, eyes soft-focus, and she tells me twice which hotel—the Gramercy Park—but not when she'll be back. Live and let live, my mother used to say to me. She told me at times about her loving father Ezra, may his memory be for a blessing. One time Ezra's younger brother, this is back in Bessarabia, now Moldova, was looking out for my grandfather's sheep. My grandfather was rich. You can imagine, a Jew in Bessarabia owning land and sheep! So one day Ezra's brother fell asleep under a tree and the sheep followed one behind the next into a river, and a thousand sheep were drowned. My mother raised her teaching finger to me: "My father, may he rest in peace, you think he groaned and yelled? He didn't even raise his voice. He knew how bad his brother felt and he didn't raise his voice."

Me, I'm not that much of a holy man. A catastrophe comes my way, I have been known to yell. But in the case of love, what good is it? No good. "So long, Ruthie. Have yourself a nice time," I say. Maybe I'm sad, but I mean it. Get it out of your system, it's not the end of the world. And I know she knows I know. Which is, frankly, a little embarrassing. She gives Gabe and me big hugs on the way out the door that Saturday morning.

On Sunday she calls, tells me about the play she saw the night before. She'll stay a couple of more days; there's something at the Brooklyn Museum, or there's a gallery, and oh, she had a terrible fight with her long-time agent Sandra. This I could have put in a fortune cookie: You will have a convenient altercation with your agent.

So she'll be home Wednesday bringing bagels.

But then it's Tuesday, September 11, and all bets are off. Gabe's at school; I pick him up at noon and we sit in front of the tube and watch the planes flying into the towers over and over, the towers coming down over and over. And we wait for a call, and we wait. No call. And I know where this Howard lives—on the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge—and I can imagine scenarios. I can't get through to the hotel. Then I reach the hotel, but she's out. I don't call Howard. And finally Ruthie gets through, she's hard to understand, a rush of story spills out, and Gabe keeps saying, "*What*, Mom?"

She starts crying, tells, cries. She was having breakfast just north of the Village, she heard the engines of the plane coming downtown and everybody went out into the street. But they couldn't see anything. She couldn't hear the explosion, but something changed in the sky. And the guy behind the counter turned on the radio for all of them, and the reports started, then stories from people coming in the restaurant. Later, she saw the darkness, though the sky above her was a beautiful blue. By then she was running uptown. She couldn't get through on a phone—now she's on a borrowed cell. And she's crying, she's afraid to go to the hotel, she wants to be home. "Is Gabe okay?"

"Sure Gabe is okay. Are *you* okay?"

All she wants is to be home. But she can't get home, can't get a train or bus that day, and in the middle of the night she calls from the hotel, says, "I've been trying to get through. Tell Gabe I'm okay. I'm safe, tell him. Listen. Lenny. Lenny, can you bring me home? I can get up to the Bronx."

I leave Gabe with his best friend, drive down first thing in the morning. Ruthie leaves her bags at the hotel and walks—luckily, she's used to long hikes—walks and then gets a bus and walks some more and winds up in Riverdale at the Hebrew Home for the Aged, where her mother died. And when I see her there, sitting on the lawn by the driveway, she hugs me and gets in without a word.

I can smell the bitter dust in her clothes. It feels

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as if we're living together in sacred time. We don't discuss it. We don't discuss anything. I get her home and make dinner.

For a month she squirrels in right here on the Cape. We're very polite, Ruthie and me. Some beautiful fall. All the cars sport ragged American flags. For a while we aren't inside a novel; maybe we're incidental characters in an epic. Epics, I keep in the dusty back room of the store. Ruth is somber and shaky, she goes off into crying jags and Gabe massages her shoulders.

We live, all three of us that fall, under a thick weight of communal darkness that lifts as the months go by. As for the personal love that might put your lost self back together? For better or for worse it seems like a small, quaint yesterday thing next to our communal losses. Or simply as unlikely as those towers rebuilding themselves, the collapse playing backward to wholeness. Whatever accounts for it, I don't say anything, she doesn't say anything; we're more each other's comfort than each other's accuser.

A couple of times I call together the folks from our minyan. Jack and his wife; Rudy—he's a widower; Stan and his lady friend and her kids; a nice young couple I haven't mentioned; and Ruth, Gabe, me. We have a potluck. And then men and women, Jews, non-Jews, we hold a kind of evening service. Maybe it's not exactly kosher, but we all stand up to say kaddish.

Soon enough, things get to seem again like the remainders on my shelves. One day, Ruthie says to me, "Lenny. . . ." That's all. It's the breathy way she says my name, I guess I've gotten used to her various songs, like recognizing birds from their calls, and I know she's recuperated enough to walk out.

The rest of the story you could write yourself. Gabe with me for a month, just the two of us, and then she wants him with her, and I'm not about to pull the kid apart. How can you make joint custody work, New York to Cape Cod? I say, okay, if I can see him a lot. "What makes you think I'd be mean to you?" she says. Her way of saying, Sure. And, of course, in less than six months she and Howard break up, romance gone awry. He goes back to Louisa, and Ruthie, she stays in the city, takes a job in publishing, finds a therapist, moves in with her divorced sister. I call Gabe on the phone a lot. I visit, he visits.

Maybe I'll move back to New York.

Summers, thank God, I'm busy. Off-season, a lot of the time, I'm at the store, ordering, reshelving, selling. It's quiet; I sit reading Dickens and wondering how he might have put it into a story. *It was the worst of times, it was the worst of times.*

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OBSERVATIONS

When the Civil-Rights Movement Was News

Thomas L. Jeffers

THE 19TH-CENTURY DANISH philosopher Søren Kierkegaard remarked that we live life forward and understand it backward. He was anticipated by William Wordsworth's definition of poetry as emotion recollected in tranquility. Philosophically, this idea is hardly foolproof, but it is true that people are not very articulate or comprehending under the influence of strong passion, and need time to remember and reflect before they can put together their sense impressions like so many clues in a puzzle.

These truisms come to mind, at any rate, in thinking about how literature—commonly retrospective, and at least semi-tranquil—enables us to understand the lives of representative figures, and more particularly whether journalism, understood as one branch of literature, can help us get a grip on the events of our time. How illuminating can be the daily, weekly, or monthly reports and summations of those who are said to be writing the first draft of history—and who do so in the heat of the moment as well as under deadline?

In at least one case, the answer is: pretty illuminating. I am speaking of the 188 items in *Reporting Civil Rights*, the new two-volume, nearly two-thousand-page record of how the American civil-rights movement passed from marches, court battles, and pacifist acts of civil disobedience in the 1940's; to the glory days of Montgomery, Little Rock, and Oxford, Mississippi, where James Meredith was the first black to enter the state university in 1962; to the squalid riots in Watts, Detroit, Harlem, etc. from 1965 on; to the beginning of the era of affirmative action, which is where this narrative ends.*

Academic historians have too often emptied all these events of their physical pain, mental anguish, and moral ambiguity, tranquilly recollecting what happened in light of outcomes they themselves might happen to favor—the Supreme Court's overturning of "separate but equal" schooling in 1954, the great Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and '65, the emergence of the Black Power movement in the mid-60's, the aggressive programs of preferential treatment thereafter. This imposition of a *plot* on what was just a *story* is not merely inevitable, it is admittedly helpful: it is how we "understand" backward. But no less helpful is recurring to the events themselves, or to those portrayals of events offered by contemporaneous journalistic accounts. Indeed, on the basis of these narratives of sit-ins, lynchings, demonstrations, marches, speeches, riots, voter-registration drives, assassinations, jailings, beatings, firebombs, "mau-mauings," and so forth, we may even start to adjudicate the relative accuracy and pertinence of such thesis-driven (and excellent) books as *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* edited by Lee Rainwater and William Yancey (1967), *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* by C. Vann Woodward (1974), *Parting of the Waters: America in the King Years* by Taylor Branch (1988), or *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and*

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* *Reporting Civil Rights, 1941-1973*. Library of America. Volume one, 996 pp. Volume two, 986 pp. $80.00.

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Development of National Policy, 1960-1972 by Hugh Davis Graham (1990).

Not that the editors of the new Library of America volumes are without their own agenda, though I would be hard-pressed to define it except negatively. Like the earlier volumes in the series entitled *Reporting Vietnam*, these give scant space to conservative (or ambivalently liberal) writers—by whom I mean not Southern segregationist reporters and editorialists, who are amply if not always fairly quoted by the liberals writing for mostly Northern newspapers and magazines, but Eudora Welty, William Faulkner, E.B. White, Walker Percy, and the early William Styron, all of whom can be found in *Voices in Our Blood: America's Best on the Civil Rights Movement* (edited by Jon Meacham, 2001).

Still, the two volumes do offer both high literary quality and a variety of genres: breaking-news accounts from the dailies (not just the *New York Times* but the *Pittsburgh Courier* or the *Baltimore Afro-American*); contemplative or profile essays from weeklies (the *Nation*, the *Reporter*, the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*) and monthlies (COMMENTARY, *Life*, *Harper's*, *Look*, *Collier's*); and, finally, substantive excerpts from important books like Robert Penn Warren's *Segregation: The Inner Conflict of the South* (1956), John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* (1961), John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley* (1962), Tom Wolfe's *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (1970), and Willie Morris's *Yazoo: Integration in a Deep-Southern Town* (1971). The editors have also provided thorough indexes, biographical notes, and a chronology.

WHAT, THEN, can we say of the writers who have furnished the pieces for these impressive volumes? To be plain, they did a splendid job recording events as they unfolded day to day. One can appreciate this by consulting the index and following, for instance, the story of Emmett Till, the fourteen-year-old from Chicago murdered in Mississippi for being "fresh" with a white woman in 1955; or of James E. Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, the civil-rights workers murdered by Mississippi law-enforcement officers in 1964. Other writers created thoughtful background pieces, placing immediate happenings in historical context and giving both participants and onlookers a perspective on larger issues. Finally, the best of them, coupling the autobiographical with the philosophical, the analytical with the prophetic, inscribed minor masterpieces of nonfiction that equal or surpass the achievements of our greatest fiction on racial themes.

And what sort of *history* emerges from the journalists' accounts? That is a longer story. At the beginning, in the mid-1940's, the fledgling civil-rights movement was seen as a continuation of the war ending in 1945 to defeat the racialist totalitarianism of the Axis powers. Black soldiers, fighting in segregated units, had bled and died in the name of an American democracy whose Constitution guaranteed them "the privileges and immunities" of citizenship. They returned in 1945 to a country that, in the South, was not acting up to code.

Reading *Reporting Civil Rights*, one is reminded how uncertain it was that America *would* in the end square itself with its Constitution. In the Deep South, as Jack H. Pollack reports, white registrars were systematically preventing blacks from registering to vote by means of a nearly impossible test of "literacy":

> "What is a writ of habeas corpus?" and "What is an ex post facto law?" A Jackson [Mississippi] Negro attempting to register was greeted with: "Now let's see whether you're up on your civics. What does *ipso facto* mean?"
>
> "That means I don't vote," replied the Negro, departing.

Nor was progress certain a decade later when, as Ben H. Bagdikian writes, Louisiana's legislature passed laws "to prohibit all interracial dancing, social functions, entertainments, athletic training, games, sports, or contests and other such activities; [and] to provide for separate seating and other facilities for whites and Negroes." As Bagdikian sardonically observes at the end of his story: "these same [Louisiana] legislators are the ones who have attacked the [1954] Supreme Court school-integration decision and civil-rights laws with the Southern battle cry: 'You can't legislate human relations.'"

In addition to being denied the right to vote, Southern blacks, many of whom lived in small towns or on farms, suffered the further indignity of Jim Crow laws, dating from the late 19th century, that established separate but equal (read: separate and unequal) facilities for education, eating, traveling, and going to the bathroom or to the theater. No wonder they were "tired," like Fannie Lou Hamer in the Mississippi Delta, "of being sick and tired." And Southern whites were sick and tired, too, though in the 40's only a few of them knew it. They included Lillian Smith (1897-1966), a well-born teacher, essayist, novelist, and fund-raiser, who, writing in 1949, recalls how she first realized that the South's entire way of life—customs, sentiments, and ideas learned from childhood—depended on a structure of inequality between blacks and whites. Nearly all whites and many blacks were used to and even comfortable with this inequality. It was not a matter of seating arrangements in a particular restaurant, bus, or train; it was *everything* people thought and felt about themselves and others.

IN THE late 1950's and early 60's, the egalitarians who were pledged to changing this everything were often white students from the North who went south to join the Free-

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dom Riders testing the new federal laws forbidding discrimination on interstate buses, or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee trying to register voters. What they faced together were mobs "using metal pipes, baseball bats, sticks, and fists . . . clubbing, punching, chasing, and beating both whites and Negroes." Black and white together, fighting for equal opportunity: it was, as Norman Mailer has said of Mark Twain's Huck Finn and the runaway slave Jim, like being "back in the happy time when the love affair [between whites and blacks] was new and all seemed possible."

Love: it is a motif that runs with striking vividness throughout the pages on those years in the Library of America volumes. And so does its opposite. Powerful white politicians like Senator James Eastland of Mississippi did their best to deny that such love was even thinkable: "Generations of Southerners yet unborn will cherish our memory because they will realize that the fight we now wage will have preserved for them their untainted racial heritage, their culture, and the institutions of the Anglo-Saxon race." But Martin Luther King, Jr. meant what he said about countering such sentiments with Christian charity: "In our struggle for justice, even Senator Eastland is a child of God, although at times a straying one." Nor, by the early 60's, were King's antagonists limited to white supremacists. In reply to Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslims, who regarded not only Eastland but all white people as "devils" slated for extermination, King clung to the doctrine of nonviolence and "the more excellent way of love."

Turning the other cheek, loving them that hate you: as events would prove, and as King himself would acknowledge in "Letter from Birmingham Jail," this feat may have been possible for individuals, but for groups it was next to impossible. By August 1963, even as people were boarding buses in New York to travel to the March on Washington, some blacks, we read, were turning on whites with "We don't need any white liberals to patronize us!" and "If this thing comes to violence, yours will be the first throat we slit. We don't need your kind. Get out of our organization." Two years later, during the Watts riots, we hear one black telling another: "We going to get every white motherf—ker comes down this street." By then, the campaign against segregation was falling victim to black nationalism and reverse segregation, and years of slavery and Jim Crowism were being avenged by all-too-human, sub-Christian hatred and assault.

DID IT have to be that way? Journalists, even if they possess the requisite moral curiosity, are not usually equipped to answer such hand-wringing questions, at least insofar as they touch upon the deeper mysteries of the human heart. For that, we turn to the great poets and novelists, and no one with such imaginative genius was working as a journalist during the civil-rights movement. King himself was no literary giant, save in the famous "Letter." But through his own experience, which included mastery of the Bible, he did know something about the human heart, and could appeal plangently to the compassionating side of the American public. What Michael Thelwell here calls "the torturous road" to the 1963 March on Washington would become, for most people looking back, the road to the mountaintop where King glimpsed the day when "on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit together at the table of brotherhood," and "my four little children will . . . not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

It is true that even the great Washington demonstration was plagued by internal dissent—some wanting confrontational speeches threatening a violent march through Georgia that would parallel General Sherman's in the Civil War, others wanting moderate speeches that would calm white nerves. But the moderates on the whole prevailed. It is thus hardly surprising that King became something of a saint to white liberals, as well as to most blacks—or that his twenty-mile march from Selma to Montgomery in the spring of 1965, seen here through Renata Adler's piece for the *New Yorker*, and monitored step by step on national television, seemed a secular equivalent to a Passion Play. Notwithstanding Alabama's Governor Wallace and his fellow white "segs," the nation at large knew that Jim Crow was dying and rejoiced at the fact. The federal government, sending several thousand soldiers to protect the marchers, had sided with "De Lawd," as King was (not always respectfully) known, and in August 1965 President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act.

And yet by 1968 King was dead, and America was right back where it had been in 1961, when the black novelist James Baldwin described King as someone who "never went around fighting with himself like we all did." Now everyone was fighting again, and the question was whether love or hatred would prevail—or, since that is simplistically phrased, whether some form of tolerance could "overcome" deep-seated racial animosities. The choice is posed in two rightly famous essays in the second Library of America volume that, by accident of chronology, precede King's "Letter": Baldwin's 50-page "Down at the Cross," from *The Fire Next Time* (1962), and Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—and Ours" (COMMENTARY, February 1963).

Subtitled "Letter from a Region in My Mind," Baldwin's meditation discloses a tension in the novelist's own consciousness between, on the one side, a still-enduring commitment to "the cross where my Savior

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died," implying a King-like love between the races, and, on the other side, a fear that, absent this love, the Black Muslims' threat of violent racial strife would be carried out: "*God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!*" In short, an almost impossible love versus a very possible hatred.

Baldwin respects the Muslims' appeal to force. As with England's military conquests in the 18th and 19th centuries, as with the then-recent fight of the Jews of Israel to regain their homeland, so too, Malcolm X had argued, blacks must take up arms to defend themselves and win the respect of others. (Respect would come with territory: Malcolm wanted to claim the deep-Southern states for blacks as a separate nation, in reparation for the sins of slavery.) But when Elijah Muhammad, in Baldwin's presence, prophesies "the holocaust awaiting the white world," and invites Baldwin to save himself by siding with his avenging race, the writer stands aloof. "I love a few people and they love me and some of them are white," Baldwin tells Elijah, "and isn't love more important than color?"

This effort to transcend what would become known as identity politics means that Baldwin has to oppose the fire-threatening Muslims with, essentially, a politics of personalism. That is, the only force that might manage the task of defeating, or at least regulating, the hatred between black and white is that of love and friendship. If enough *individuals* could share such feelings, then the groups, potentially at each other's throat, might yet be content with the gradual improvement of things as they are. Such is Baldwin's moving if quixotic hope, more easily entertained at his country place in France than back home in Harlem. (In time, he abandoned Harlem and America altogether.)

As the still-new editor at COMMENTARY, Podhoretz had commissioned Baldwin to write "Down at the Cross," only to see the piece printed, with great sensation, in the pages of the *New Yorker*, which paid him a then-astronomical $12,000. In this instance, the loss turned out to be a win for COMMENTARY, for Baldwin's essay stimulated Podhoretz to write his own momentous response.

In "My Negro Problem—and Ours," Podhoretz does not focus on civil rights *per se*, though he implicitly acknowledges their importance. Instead, he too zeroes in on the personal, telling what it was like, as a Jewish boy growing up in Brooklyn from the early 30's to the mid-40's, to be "in relation" to blacks. Contrary to what he would later be *told* about the supposed "realities" of American life, what he *experienced* as a boy, he writes, was not white supremacy and black victimization, but rather the opposite: it was he and his friends who were persecuted by young black males. Baited, bullied, and beaten, the young Podhoretz naturally feared and hated blacks—just as, noting their physical grace in sports or dance, or their ability to thumb their noses at authority in school or on the streets, he envied them.

Fear, hatred, and envy were in any case no basis for feeling neighborly, which is why Podhoretz in this essay believes, for reasons very different from Elijah Muhammad's, that the integrationist program is doomed. Doomed, too, are Baldwin's (and King's) pleas for love, which are all right in the home or on the Sabbath but of little relevance to the weekday world of politics. And besides, the hatred on both sides is too strong for love to overcome. Something like "regulated hatred" might, accordingly, be the best we can hope for in the medium term. As for the longer term, Podhoretz puts forward a very American, and very desperate, proposal: let the races blend together through mixed marriage.

AS WE know from Podhoretz's later writings, two objections from the black novelist Ralph Ellison stopped this interracialist thinking in its tracks: first, the children of white-black marriages would simply be looked on as black, and would accordingly suffer from white prejudice; second, black culture had, in America as well as in Africa, produced music, literature, religion, and folklore worthy of respect, and rather than cast their culture off as a "stigma," blacks ought to continue building upon it.

From the perspective of today, four decades later, Ellison's well-taken strictures have assumed a bitter poignancy. White prejudice, by every relevant index, is weaker than ever in the United States, and black economic and social progress has reached, overall, a stage unimaginable in the 1940's. In the meantime, the efflorescence of African-American studies programs in our colleges and universities has given young people ample opportunity to build upon black culture.

But the self-ghettoization of such programs is a far cry from W.E.B. Du Bois's elation, nearly a century ago, over the erasure of color bars between himself and the great artists of any time, place, or race, and the promise of "multiculturalism" has too often been frustrated by blacks-only dorms, study centers, and tables in dining-halls. The post-King outbreaks of rioting in our major cities, the heated and sometimes violent controversy over court-ordered busing of school children, the traps of self-pity and self-righteousness set by today's religion of victimology, and of course the morally flawed, legally questionable practice of preferential discrimination in college admissions, hiring, and political appointments—all these have contributed to raising walls instead of breaking them down.

One can indeed sometimes spot the birth moments—scattered, occasionally simultaneous—of these troubles in the Library of America's record of events up to 1973, and the pundits' ruminations on those events. A crucial series of episodes

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centers on the emergence of Black Power in the mid-60's, both under the Muslims and through the rhetoric of New Left-allied spokesmen like Stokely Carmichael (chronicled in pieces by Gordon Parks and Sol Stern). The effect on black neighborhoods in the cities was disastrous, especially when Black Power theorizing spiraled into "burn, baby, burn!": city blocks were incinerated, businesses ruined, outlying whites made fearful and suspicious, and lives (mostly black) lost in exchange for ripped-off cans of peaches and boxes of stereo equipment.

The effect on educated whites was not good, either, as one can see from Joan Didion's supercilious, impercipient portrait of Huey Newton (1968), or from Tom Wolfe's almost zoological exposé (1968-69) of the methods by which "mau-mauing" ruffians off the black streets emasculated the guilt-bearing white "flak catchers" on city councils and in corporate board rooms, shaking them down for money for "poverty programs":

> The [Chicago] police would argue that in giving all that money to gangs like the Blackstone Rangers the poverty bureaucrats were financing criminal elements and helping to destroy the community. The poverty bureaucrats would argue that they were doing just the opposite. They were bringing the gangs [the "real leaders" of the black community] into the system. . . . This didn't mean that crime decreased or that a man discontinued his particular hustles. He wasn't a hustler or a hood. He was a fighter for the people, a ghetto warrior.

Did someone say Al Sharpton for President?

But not much good can be done, now, by lamenting the indisputably wrong turns the civil-rights movement took from the day after the 1963 March on Washington. Ours is a different moment, and a radically transformed society. That, however, is also why it is useful to remember the heroic struggle waged up to the March, and afterward, in securing equal access to public accommodations and facilities and in giving the largest American minority a pride in themselves that was matched by a new respect from the white majority. That pride and respect can be affirmed now as they were then: by celebrating not what, because of color, was given but what, thanks to character, was achieved.

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MUSIC

Sondheim's Operas

Terry Teachout

IN MARCH, London's Royal Opera House announced plans to produce Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. This will be the first musical ever to be performed by the company on its main stage at Covent Garden. In explaining the decision, Antonio Pappano, the company's musical director, said he wanted to "open the windows," adding:

> I am not interested in this old argument about what is opera and what is musical theater. Often it's so intense and serious here, but it is O.K. for this opera house to have fun, too.

The defensiveness of Pappano's tone says more about Covent Garden in particular than about the state of opera in general. *Sweeney Todd*, after all, has been a fixture in American opera houses and concert halls ever since the New York City Opera staged it in 1984, five years after it opened on Broadway. The New York Philharmonic performed *Sweeney Todd* in concert three years ago, and the show was presented at Washington's Eisenhower Opera House last summer as part of the Kennedy Center's Sondheim Celebration. Earlier this season, Chicago's Lyric Opera took *Sweeney Todd* into its repertoire, engaging the celebrated Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel to sing the title role.

Nor is *Sweeney Todd* the only Sondheim show to have entered the repertoire. *A Little Night Music*, Sondheim's 1973 musical version of the Ingmar Bergman film *Smiles of a Summer Night*, has also been successfully produced by many companies, most recently this spring by the New York City Opera.[1]

Moreover, few American theatergoers would be likely to suppose that the way for an opera company to display its populist sentiments is to produce *Sweeney Todd*, or any other Sondheim musical. To the contrary, Sondheim is widely viewed as a coterie artist whose work appeals only to a small band of loyalists, and while most drama critics admire his work, there are several dissenters. (Prominent among them is Mark Steyn, who has called Sondheim "the man who knows more than anyone else about musicals except how to write one where you don't notice how much he knows.") Those who dislike his songs dismiss them as tuneless and cold, and even some of his most fervent admirers find his musical language forbiddingly complex.

Whatever the truth of these criticisms, Sondheim's popular appeal is demonstrably narrower than that of the great Broadway songwriters of the past. Only one of his songs, "Send in the Clowns," has become a standard, and the original productions of most of his shows have lost money. At the same time, Broadway itself is now far less hospitable to musically challenging scores, and in recent years a growing percentage of the new musicals opening in New York have been "jukebox" shows, such as *Contact*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Movin' Out*, whose

TERRY TEACHOUT, COMMENTARY*'s regular music critic, has recently become drama critic of the* Wall Street Journal. A Terry Teachout Reader, *a collection of his essays on art and culture, will be published next spring by Yale University Press.*

[1] All of Sondheim's shows have been recorded by their original casts, including *Sweeney Todd* (RCA Red Seal 3379-2-RC, two CD's) and *A Little Night Music* (Sony Classical SK 65284). These albums, and others mentioned below, can be purchased online by viewing this article during May on COMMENTARY's website, www.commentarymagazine.com.

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undemanding "scores" are pieced together from pre-existing pop songs. It is hard to think of a single memorable song of the past half-dozen years that was first heard on a Broadway stage.

Given all this, one inevitably wonders whether certain of Sondheim's shows might indeed belong in opera houses rather than on Broadway. Sondheim himself makes no secret of thinking otherwise. He even affects not to like opera, and has never written a work intended for opera-house production. Still, the alacrity with which *Sweeney Todd* and *A Little Night Music* have been taken up by major opera companies in America and elsewhere raises the question of whether they might really have been, all along, modern operas in disguise.

THE QUESTION cannot be answered without first attempting to define two famously slippery terms. To take a pair of radically contrasting examples, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is definitely an opera, and *Annie Get Your Gun* is no less definitely a musical. One obvious difference between them is that *Annie Get Your Gun* is a play with spoken dialogue into which simple closed-form songs have been interpolated, whereas *Tristan* is a quasi-symphonic work in which every word is sung.

Admittedly, this broad-gauge distinction does not hold true in all cases: *Carmen*, a French *opéra-comique*, and *The Magic Flute*, a German *Singspiel*, both contain spoken dialogue and simple, song-like arias. In that respect, both of these operas would seem to have more in common with *Annie Get Your Gun* than with *Tristan*, and it is worth noting that Oscar Hammerstein II rewrote the libretto of *Carmen* and successfully brought it to Broadway in 1943 as *Carmen Jones*.[2] Similarly, Michael John LaChiusa, a Broadway composer who contends that his stage works are musicals rather than operas, regards *The Magic Flute*, which ranks among the highest and most profound expressions of the operatic ideal, as a "prototype" of the modern musical.

Yet *Carmen* and *The Magic Flute*, different though they are from *Tristan*, also have something essential in common with it. They are *scores*, unified musico-dramatic structures whose separate parts serve a larger theatrical end. By contrast, nearly all the songs in *Annie Get Your Gun* are free-standing entities that can be sung on their own without reference to the show and its plot. And while the arias of Bizet and Mozart are fully as hummable as the songs of Irving Berlin, they aspire, like the music of Wagner, to a far higher level of technical sophistication and—lest we forget—emotional intensity. Not all musicals are comedies, but few if any are tragedies.

In addition, opera differs from musical comedy in that its theatrical effects are almost always nonverbal in origin. An opera libretto is a dramatic situation brought to life by music. To be sure, words are sung (or spoken) by the performers, but their literary quality is irrelevant. All that matters is the quality of the music and the plausibility of the situation it illustrates. Even in an *opéra-comique* or *Singspiel*, the performers usually spend much more time singing than speaking. In a musical, most of the book is spoken, so it must be engaging enough in its own right to hold the audience's attention.

Musical-comedy singing is also more conversational in style than operatic singing: the words of a song must be as memorable as the music (though their relative importance will vary from song to song). That is why relatively few operagoers know the words to the *Liebestod* in *Tristan und Isolde*, whereas most theatergoers know the lyrics to all their favorite show tunes.

WHERE DO the musicals of Stephen Sondheim rank on this continuum? *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962), *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Company* (1970), and *Follies* (1971), the first four Broadway shows for which he wrote both words and music, are all essentially non-operatic in structure. Instead, they are book-driven, and the songs and ensembles, though distinctive in style, are nonetheless rooted in the conventional musical-comedy practice that Sondheim learned from his youthful apprenticeship with Oscar Hammerstein II.

Even so, two things set these works well apart from other musicals of the 60's and 70's. The first is Sondheim's compositional technique. Unlike most of the American songwriters who preceded him, he had extensive classical training—he studied with the avant-garde composer Milton Babbitt—and was strongly influenced by the harmonic usages of the French impressionists. As a result, his songs are typically based on undulating chordal figurations over which he superimposes melodies painstakingly built up out of short, angular motivic fragments.[3] Listeners familiar with the music of Debussy and Ravel (or with modern jazz) will hear nothing abstruse or elusive in this approach, but anyone whose knowledge of music is limited to the ballads of such Broadway composers as Berlin or Richard Rodgers, with their long, seemingly self-generating melodic

[2] The extent to which *Carmen* prefigures the Broadway musical is demonstrated no less vividly by the recording made in 1950 by André Cluytens and the Théâtre National de l'Opéra-Comique (EMI Classics 5 65318 2, two CD's), the company for which the work was originally composed. This pungent small-scale performance, with its all-French cast and crisply delivered spoken dialogue, has little in common with the overblown, unidiomatic productions seen at such large houses as the Metropolitan Opera.

[3] In addition to being his most popular song, "Send in the Clowns" (from *A Little Night Music*) is a perfect example of Sondheim's tendency to construct even the most lyrical of his melodies out of these building blocks—in this case, the four-note cell to which the first and second lines ("Isn't it rich?/Are we a pair?") are both sung.

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lines, will likely find Sondheim's songs to be insufficiently tuneful.[4]

No less individual are his lyrics—and the sentiments they express. Though Sondheim's virtuosity is not without precedent (few of his elaborate rhymes would sound out of place in a lyric by Ira Gershwin or Cole Porter), his ambivalence toward love is all but unique in American songwriting. Ambivalence, he has said, is his "favorite thing to write about, because it's the way I feel, and I think the way most people feel." Perhaps, but it is also arguably the main reason why his work has never become popular. Even Lorenz Hart, the most disillusioned of American lyricists, left no doubt of his fervent, even desperate longing for the condition about which he wrote with such self-lacerating wit. Not so Sondheim, whose best songs are more often than not written from the point of view of a fearful, alienated man unable to open himself up to the prospect of romantic love.

Sometimes, as in "Being Alive," the finale of *Company*, he suggests that true love necessarily entails a near-intolerable sacrifice of personal autonomy: "Someone to need you too much,/Someone to know you too well,/Someone to pull you up short,/To put you through hell." At other times, as in the title song of *Anyone Can Whistle*, he portrays it as desirable but impossible: "It's all so simple:/Relax, let go, let fly./So someone tell me, why/Can't I?"

Sondheim's perspective on love, which is as distinctively "modern" as is his musical language, constitutes a near-complete break with the romantic optimism of the American musical-comedy tradition. In his next show, *A Little Night Music*, he moved still farther from that tradition, composing an operetta-like musical about the narrowing horizons of middle age. Though it is a bittersweet comedy with a happy ending *à la* Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (from which Sondheim quotes directly in "A Weekend in the Country," the brilliantly constructed first-act finale), *A Little Night Music* is ultimately no less bleak in its view of romantic possibility than its immediate predecessors, *Company* and *Follies*. It is, however, far more musically elaborate and demanding than any of Sondheim's previous shows, so much so as to approach in places the complexity of a full-scale opera.

Two things, however, prevent *A Little Night Music* from attaining true operatic status. One is the vocal writing: two of the show's leading roles were originally intended for performance by nonsinging actresses. The other is the large amount of spoken dialogue, which many opera singers are unable to negotiate effectively.[5] Still, it is obvious that Sondheim was interested in moving beyond the narrow expressive compass of the old-fashioned Broadway musical, and in his next show he would do so decisively.

The opening scene of *Sweeney Todd* is one of Stephen Sondheim's most spectacular dramatic coups. An organ fills the theater with sober, Bach-like sounds. The ugly shriek of a factory whistle cleaves the air, and, as its echo dies away, the orchestra begins murmuring nervously. Then, one by one, the members of the chorus emerge from the near-silence, each singing a single ominous sentence: "Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd./His skin was pale and his eye was odd./He shaved the faces of gentlemen/Who never thereafter were heard of again."

So begins Sondheim's macabre musical version of Christopher Bond's play about a demented barber who slits his clients' throats, then uses their flesh as filling for the tastiest meat pies in London. By his own account, Sondheim's immediate reaction upon seeing the play for the first time was to wonder whether it might serve as "the basis of a good operatic piece." The stage director John Dexter, who had been encouraging Sondheim to write "a through-composed piece" and was familiar with the theatrical requirements of opera, replied unhesitatingly that it would be "perfect." Six years later, *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, billed as "a musical thriller," opened at Broadway's Uris Theater, where it ran for 558 performances, 434 more than the original production of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

The question of what Sondheim and librettist Hugh Wheeler had written thus seemed to have been answered more or less straightforwardly: *Sweeney Todd* was a musical. But just as *Porgy and Bess* defied such easy categorization, so did *Sweeney Todd* refuse to fit into any known theatrical pigeonhole. Parts of it were comic, but in a manner so black as to recall Jonathan Swift at his most ferocious. Nor did Sondheim and Wheeler spare their audiences anything in the way of horror: *Sweeney Todd* ends with a stageful of dead bodies and dazed survivors. The score, as Sondheim had promised, was "through-composed," with a minimum of spoken dialogue and a maximum of richly expansive music greater in force and intensity than anything that had previously been heard on a Broadway stage. No other musical, not even the similarly operatic *Porgy and Bess* or Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* (for which Sondheim had written the lyrics) had pushed so hard against the outer limits of the genre.

True, for all its self-evident sophis-

[4] Most of Sondheim's songs are also too firmly rooted in their original dramatic contexts to be fully intelligible when sung on their own, though several of them, including "Another Hundred People," "Anyone Can Whistle," "Every Day a Little Death," "I Remember," "Losing My Mind," "Not a Day Goes By," "Pretty Women," and "There Won't Be Trumpets," are frequently performed by cabaret singers and deserve to be taken up by other vocalists as well.

[5] In its recent revival of *A Little Night Music*, the New York City Opera used experienced stage actors in most of the principal roles. As a result, the show was well acted but noticeably undersung.

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tication, the sources of *Sweeney Todd* were wholly popular. Bond's original play was a modernized version of a 19th-century melodrama that had once played in theaters all over England; Sondheim had gone to see it because it was the closest thing he could find to the grisly spectacles of Paris's Théâtre du Grand Guignol, the long-popular company that specialized in one-act horror plays written for the sole purpose of scaring tourists. And once he started writing the score to *Sweeney Todd*, he found himself drawn to the music of Bernard Herrmann, the film composer whose scores for such thrillers as Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and John Brahm's *Hangover Square* were at once ripely romantic and psychologically unsettling. "It's an open secret," Sondheim has written, "that the music for *Sweeney* is in homage to Herrmann's harmonic language."

All this notwithstanding, *Sweeney Todd* is rooted in a style of music drama far more characteristic of the opera house than of Broadway or Hollywood. Just as its tightly knit ensembles and Debussyan harmonies ("The Ballad of Sweeney Todd" contains near-verbatim quotations from *La Mer* and *Nuages*) speak of a wider musical awareness, so do its theatrical methods imply a seriousness of purpose alien to the musical-comedy idiom of Sondheim's youth.

It is not merely the lurid subject matter that sets *Sweeney Todd* apart, though that alone would have been sufficient to put it far outside the ambit of conventional musical comedy. Major characters may have died violent deaths in other musicals, among them *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, and *West Side Story*, but what was unique was the savage irony with which Sondheim killed them off. The first-act finale, "A Little Priest," is a rollicking waltz whose lyrics pay sardonic homage to the social utility of cannibalism: "The history of the world, my sweet,/Is who gets eaten and who gets to eat." Similarly, the show's most tender ballad, "Not While I'm Around," is sung by Toby, an unsuspecting street urchin, to Mrs. Lovett, an amoral monster who at that very moment is scheming to have him killed.

Most disturbing of all is "Epiphany," an overtly operatic mad scene in which Sweeney dedicates himself to the sacred cause of mass murder. Wracked with grief over the death of Lucy, his wife, he comes to the horrific conclusion that "we all deserve to die" and vows to bring about that end by slashing the throats of his customers, one by one: "I will have vengeance,/I will have salvation! . . /I'm alive at last/And I'm full of joy!"

Nor is the blackness of Sondheim's "comedy" merely cynical. Sweeney is a genuinely tragic figure, a man driven mad by his longing for revenge not merely on those individuals who have wronged him but on an entire society that he takes to be poisoned by hypocrisy: "Swing your razor wide, Sweeney!/ Hold it to the skies!/ Freely flows the blood of those/ Who moralize!" Yet as he looks into the abyss and laughs, he fails to see that the terrible logic of "we all deserve to die" must in time lead him to kill not only the wicked but the innocent—and even, in the end, those whom he loves most.

Such emotional extremism is the stuff of grand opera, of *Rigoletto* and *Otello* and *Don Giovanni*, and a few of those who saw *Sweeney Todd* in 1979 knew as much. On opening night, the veteran theater critic Harold Clurman spotted Schuyler Chapin, then the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, in the lobby of the Uris Theater. Chapin later told Meryle Secrest, Sondheim's biographer:

> He came charging across the lobby at me and said, "Why didn't you put this on at the Met?" And I replied, "I would have put it on like a shot, if I'd had the opportunity." And I would have. There would have been screams and yells and I wouldn't have given a damn. Because it is an opera. A modern American opera.

Once again, Sondheim affects to differ with this appraisal. For him, *Sweeney Todd* is not an opera but, rather, "a black operetta in feeling and form." The distinction is a finicky one, and not fully convincing: if *Sweeney Todd* is something other than an opera, then what is *Carmen*?[6] In any case, such distinctions have grown less relevant now that the rampant hybridizing of postmodern polystylism has come to dominate art forms of all kinds. Besides, regardless of whether *Sweeney Todd* is a true opera, it is without doubt one of the 20th century's most powerful and thought-provoking pieces of musical theater.

NEVER AGAIN would Sondheim write a work so frankly operatic in style and scale as *Sweeney Todd*, though two of his later shows, *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984) and *Passion* (1994), make similar use of operatic techniques and might also benefit from opera-house production.[7] Sondheim's continuing reluctance to abandon Broadway is undoubtedly rooted in his dislike of the old-fashioned operatic production style of his youth, with its enervating emphasis on singing over drama. In addition, and somewhat self-contradictorily, he seems to feel both that his talents are too good for musical shows and that the shows themselves are not good *enough*. "I'm serious," he has said, "but I'm serious in an art [form] that

[6] A more compelling objection to *Sweeney Todd*'s acceptance as an opera is that it was orchestrated not by the composer but by Jonathan Tunick, who has scored most of Sondheim's Broadway shows. Indeed, Sondheim's inability to write directly for the orchestra is a major limitation of his work. Not only is much of his "orchestral" writing too obviously pianistic in origin, but the fact that he allows the instrumental colors and textures of his music to be supplied by other hands means that he cannot be given full credit for its creation.

[7] The original cast albums of *Sunday in the Park with George* (RCA Red Seal RCD1-5042) and *Passion* (Angel CDQ 55251) are both available on CD.

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is barely worth being called one. There's a case to be made for 'Am I wasting my time in the long run?'"

The first of these objections—the one about production style—is puzzling, since there are any number of medium-sized American opera companies in which theatrically serious productions are mounted as a matter of course. Foremost among them is the New York City Opera, whose artistic director, Paul Kellogg, intends to make Sondheim's shows a regular part of that company's repertoire.[8] Moreover, it is now commonplace for operatically trained singers to be at home with popular music, and much of Sondheim's music could only profit from being interpreted by such artists.

The question of whether he is working in a medium unworthy of his talents is harder to answer. It may make more sense to say instead that his best work is too serious in tone to appeal to the same audience that flocks to such latter-day Broadway hits as Mel Brooks's *The Producers*. If this is in fact the case, then it is probable that his shows will flourish only to the extent that adventurous opera companies take them into their repertories (festival-style undertakings such as the Kennedy Center's Sondheim Celebration being by definition exceptional).

To be sure, some of Sondheim's musicals are hopelessly ill-suited to opera-house production. While *Sweeney Todd* and *A Little Night Music* have long since proved their viability, a show like *Company*, with its extended dialogue scenes and pop-flavored score, is no more operatic than *Annie Get Your Gun* or *Guys and Dolls*, and would sound no less absurd when performed by classically trained singers in a large house.

As for his more musically ambitious scores, Sondheim himself may have predicted their eventual fate in observing pithily that "when [Gian Carlo Menotti's] *The Medium* and *The Telephone* were done on Broadway, they were Broadway musicals; when they were done in opera houses, they were operas." In recalling the short-lived vogue of the 30's and 40's for Broadway productions of such then-new operas as *The Medium* and Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (a vogue distantly echoed in the Baz Luhrmann-directed version of Puccini's *La Bohème* currently running on Broadway), Sondheim reminds us that his are not the only important musical-theater works that have initially presented problems of definition. Should *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Passion* be successfully taken up by opera houses, then they, too, will become operas, and Stephen Sondheim will be recognized as one of the notable opera composers of the 20th century, whether he likes it or not.

For the moment, though, we are left with just two Sondheim "operas," of which the first, *A Little Night Music*, is problematic not only because of its heavy reliance on spoken dialogue but because of its characteristically ambivalent tone. The emotional power of comic opera—indeed, of all "serious" comedy—arises when the dramatic conflicts driving the plot are resolved through romantic reconciliation. The sense of restored unity this reconciliation produces in the viewer is what makes the "happy endings" of comic operas like Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* or Verdi's *Falstaff* seem earned rather than imposed.

The light-hearted ending of *A Little Night Music*, by contrast, is at odds with the anti-romantic sentiments expressed in such characteristic songs—compelling in themselves—as "Every Day a Little Death" ("Love's disgusting, love's insane/A humiliating business/Oh, how true") or "The Miller's Son":

> It's a very short fetch
> From the push and the whoop
> To the squint and the stoop and
> the mumble.
> It's not much of a stretch
> To the cribs and the croup
> And the bosoms that droop and
> go dry.

After such knowledge, what reconciliation?

Sweeney Todd, by contrast, does not pretend to be a comedy (despite the fact that much of it is bitingly funny). Here, at last, Sondheim has accepted the tragic implications of his worldview and produced a score whose "operatic" anguish and violence—not to mention its operatic scope and largeness of gesture—are consistent with that view.

Needless to say, *Sweeney Todd* continues to be produced as a musical, most recently (and impressively) as part of the Sondheim Celebration. But I am increasingly inclined to think that it makes its strongest effect when sung and played by classically trained artists capable of rising to its near-operatic musical challenges. Heard under such circumstances, it is easier to recognize as a work which, for all its deep roots in musical comedy, can hold its own without apology in the operatic repertoire. To be sure, one might well hesitate to compare it directly with such major works as, say, Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Leoš Janáček's *The Makropoulos Case*, or Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. But I have no doubt that it is the most successful of all American operas, better than *Four Saints in Three Acts*, or Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*, or—yes—*Porgy and Bess*.

[8] The company will be reviving its 1984 production of *Sweeney Todd*, directed by Harold Prince, next season.

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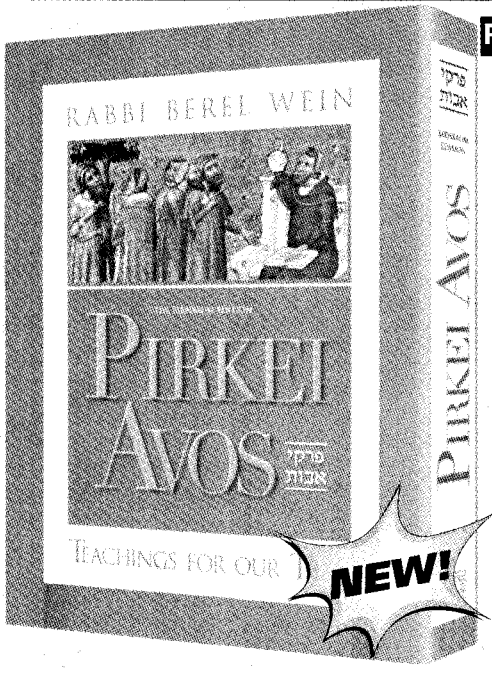

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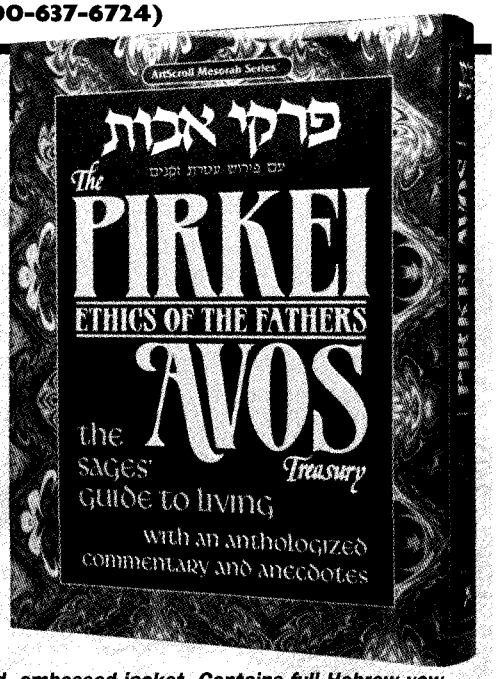

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Books in Review

Witch-hunt

No Crueler Tyrannies: Accusation, False Witness, and Other Terrors of Our Times
by Dorothy Rabinowitz
Free Press. 239 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Carol Iannone

THE WITCHCRAFT trials that took place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 are an appallingly fascinating episode in our history. Thanks to Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible* (1952), they have also become a supposedly essential piece of our national self-understanding—essential, that is, from the liberal point of view. In representing the Salem trials as a proxy for the McCarthy hearings of the early 1950's, Miller suggested that America was a country prone to inquisitorial rampages, ever on the lookout for imaginary malefactors to punish in order to satisfy a simplistic worldview of good versus evil.

With that in mind, one might have thought that the country's most prominent progressives would have leaped to the bars, benches, and barricades to defend the falsely accused when allegations of mass sexual abuse against children erupted in the 1980's and 1990's. These were cases, after all, in which outlandish, ever-escalating charges were leveled at totally innocent people, in which gross violations of due process and constitutional rights were committed, and in which terribly wrongful convictions were obtained.

But one would have been wrong. Instead, it was left to a single reporter, the heroic Dorothy Rabinowitz, to undertake in-depth investigations of the worst of these cases and to bring their horrifying transgressions of justice to the attention of a wider public. Eventually, her work helped to secure the legal and financial assistance necessary to free most of the victims—but not before lives were shattered, livelihoods lost, savings exhausted, families destroyed, and miserable years passed in prison.

Even now, while some unfortunates still languish in jail, and contrived sexual-abuse charges remain toxically potent weapons, no new Arthur Miller has emerged to write a play or produce so much as a movie of the week. But we do have Rabinowitz's riveting new book, *No Crueler Tyrannies*, based on the brilliant investigative articles, mostly for the *Wall Street Journal*, that helped earn her a Pulitzer Prize in 2001. And that is quite enough for the present.

RABINOWITZ RELATES six awful tales. Two of them—those of Patrick Griffin of New York City and John Carroll of Troy, New York—stemmed from trumped-up charges brought by just one source. In a third case, that of Grant Snowden of Miami, prosecutors kept filing charges even after his first trial ended in acquittal, and finally found two coachable children to help convict him. The other three cases were instances of government-orchestrated mass hysteria. Here Rabinowitz describes the persecutions endured by Margaret Kelly Michaels, a young Maplewood, New Jersey nursery-school teacher sentenced in 1988 to 47 years in prison

CAROL IANNONE, *who writes frequently on literature and culture, contributed "Woolf, Women, and 'The Hours'" to our April issue.*

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on 115 counts of child abuse; the story of the 40 residents of Wenatchee, Washington arrested in 1995 as members of a child-abuse "sex ring"; and the nightmare of the Amirault family of Malden, Massachusetts, the most notorious of the cases and the one that, for Rabinowitz, subsumes the evils of the others.

The ordeal of sixty-year-old Violet Amirault and her adult children, Gerald and Cheryl, began in 1984. Worried about the behavior of her young son, a mother at the Fells Acres Day School, which the Amiraults had successfully operated together for many years, prodded the boy to tell of anything strange that might have been done to him. The child dimly recalled an instance in which Gerald had changed his underwear (as it would later emerge, the child had wet himself). Then, after months of questioning, the boy began to talk about sexual acts.

The mother called the child-abuse hotline. In short order, the police arrested Gerald, closed down the school, and began coaching parents on how to elicit charges of molestation from their children, instructing them not to accept denials and to see such ordinary problems as bed-wetting and loss of appetite as signs of abuse. Charges began pouring forth, and Violet and Cheryl were also arrested.

The district attorney and prosecutors enlisted the help of therapists, social workers, and abuse experts, who spent months interviewing the three-, four-, and five-year-old children and preparing them to testify. Tapes and transcripts of the sessions reveal that the tykes did their best to hold on to the truth, but that their implacable inquisitors eventually managed to break them down. A pediatric nurse, Susan Kelley, was especially gifted in these techniques, promising rewards and telling children that they were "helping" the adults by making charges. Armed with anatomically correct dolls and puppets, Kelley refused to rest until weary tots finally pointed to a penis, vagina, or rectum.

The Amiraults were accused of preposterous violations of the children in their care—shoving pencils, sticks, and knives into their orifices (while leaving no signs of injury), tying them naked to trees in broad daylight in front of the other teachers, forcing them to watch the killing and dismemberment of animals, and making them drink urine. They were accused of taking the children to a "magic room" in which clowns wielding wands undressed and assaulted them and took their pictures. At trial, the children (now between the ages of six and eight) were permitted to testify while looking away from the defendants, in violation of both the Massachusetts and U.S. constitutions. In the proceedings against Violet and Cheryl, the judge permitted the prosecution to intimate, without any evidence whatsoever, that they were somehow involved in child pornography.

All three Amiraults were convicted of multiple counts of rape and indecent assault and battery. Violet and Cheryl spent eight years in prison before their convictions were overturned, only to see them reinstated a year and a half later. At that point, seventy-three-year-old Violet passed from this world, bitter and broken. In 1999, after fifteen years of living hell, Cheryl was able to get her sentence reduced to "time served," though she remains on probation. Gerald, sentenced to a term of 30 to 40 years, is still in jail, his young family having grown to adulthood during his incarceration.

RABINOWITZ RELATES these incredible stories with spare, controlled intensity. She pours scorn on the fools and zealots of the legal system while making vivid the devastation that they wreaked upon the victims and their families. One finishes this fast-paced book feeling a little like Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown, who emerges from the dark forest after a night of witnessing satanic revels, his faith in human nature shattered.

It is not that the cases lack heroes. There were clearheaded judges who reversed unjust decisions; lawyers who worked long hours, often pro bono, to provide counsel and mount appeals; ordinary friends and neighbors who refused to believe the charges; and generous philanthropists and great-hearted readers of the *Wall Street Journal* who poured out funds. Thanks to their efforts, and thanks especially to Rabinowitz herself, many of the victims of these modern-day witch-hunts have been vindicated.

But the hall of shame is much larger. In the Amirault case alone, the villains include the obsessed, unappeasable district attorneys and prosecutors of Middlesex County; the disgraceful dolts of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, who frustrated at least a half-dozen attempts to exonerate or free the Amiraults; and Jane Swift, who as acting governor of Massachusetts yielded to obscure political pressure and turned down the recommendation of the notoriously tough Massachusetts parole board to release Gerald Amirault and put an end to this dreadful case.

One hungers to know more about the larger forces that permitted these outrages to occur. Rabinowitz lays some of the blame, in passing, on "advanced political opinion," which has created an aura of piety around claims of violation made by women and children. On this view, as Rabinowitz writes, to side with the falsely accused would have been "to undermine the battle against child abuse; it was to betray children and all other victims of sexual predators." Even to raise *questions* about these cases would have been tantamount, in the opinion of one of the Amiraults' tormentors, to victimizing the children all over again.

One might also point an accusing finger at our schools of law and social work, where whole cadres of professionals have been trained to

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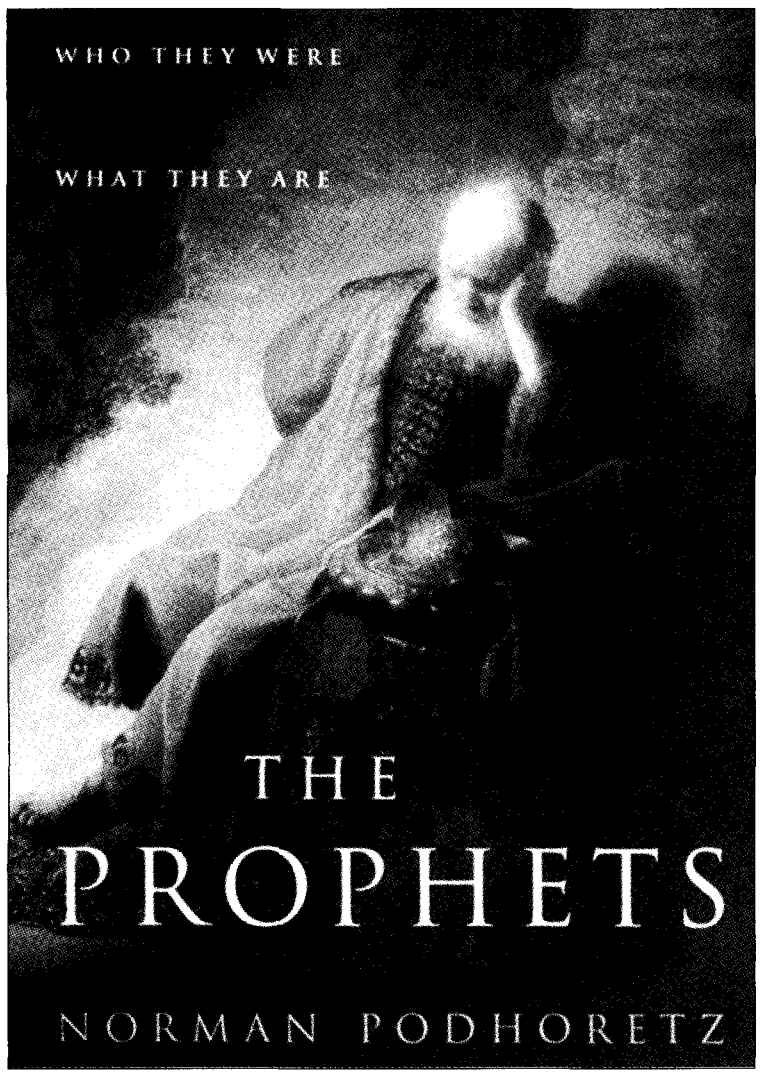

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survey every social setting for evidence of "oppression" and victimization. As if to prove the point, the experts involved in winning the original conviction against the Amiraults met afterward to congratulate themselves in a seminar titled "The Fells Acres Day School Case: A Model Multidisciplinary Response."

Our culture's gross sexualization of children is undoubtedly part of the problem as well, creating worries that did not exist a generation or two ago. Many of the parents in these cases plainly found relief in the pillorying of individuals who seemed to embody their own worst fears. Finally, and not to be underestimated, simple, old-fashioned careerism and self-promotion played their part in the actions of various public officials.

It would take far more than the modest, politicized talent of an Arthur Miller to do justice to the range of human failings and vices on display in these cases. But with her impassioned, relentless pen, Dorothy Rabinowitz has come very close, in an achievement for which all of us must be grateful.

School of Terror

The Degaev Affair
by Richard Pipes
Yale. 153 pp. $17.95

Reviewed by
David Pryce-Jones

LATE-19TH-CENTURY Russian revolutionaries became a byword for terrorism in much of the world. Self-declared socialists and Marxists, they were utopian in outlook but nihilist in method. The murder of the czar and a few of his advisers, they had convinced themselves, was the necessary prelude to remaking autocratic Russia into a society of perfect justice and equality. The end justified the unlimited violence of the means. At a wide remove from reality, the revolutionaries lived in a seething atmosphere of messianism and murder, conspiracy and self-deception, to which only novelists of the stature of Fyodor Dostoevsky (in *The Possessed*) and Joseph Conrad could do justice. Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* describes the fate of Razumov, a Russian caught between the practice of revolutionary terror and his finer feelings: "For who, with us in Russia, is to tell a scoundrel from an exceptionally able man?"

This question serves as the epigraph to Richard Pipes's *The Degaev Affair*. One of the most distinguished historians of Russia, and of Bolshevism in particular, Pipes habitually deploys a grand narrative sweep. By contrast, his new book, more of an extended essay, is a miniaturist portrait of a single terrorist and murderer who was without doubt "an exceptionally able man"—and a scoundrel. Only specialists are likely to be familiar with the name of Sergei Degaev. From a handful of obscure memoirs and some unpublished material in the Russian archives, Pipes has reconstructed his career, giving us a real-life thriller that is also a cautionary tale rich with insight into depths of the human psyche that most of us have the good fortune to know about only by hearsay.

BORN IN Moscow in 1857, Degaev was the son of a military physician who bore the title of State Councilor and who died young, leaving a widow and several children. According to the later testimony of Vera Figner, herself a leading revolutionary, the whole Degaev family had a "tendency to exaggeration, effects, and even extravagance." Intelligent and practical at one level, Sergei Degaev was also unstable; for him, revolution seems to have been, at least at first, a way of striking a fashionable posture in the circles in which he moved.

In 1880, at the age of twenty-three, Degaev became a member of People's Will, a clandestine group numbering at most a few hundred. Its inner executive committee had no more than two dozen members. Most of the terrorists themselves came from the educated and propertied classes; so, Pipes makes clear, did most of their sympathizers in Russian society. In today's parlance, the terrorists were psychopaths, for whom death provided the meaning and purpose of their lives. Eager to sacrifice themselves for the revolutionary cause, they blurred the line between murder and suicide. Over a few short years, People's Will succeeded in assassinating Czar Alexander II, terrifying his son and successor Alexander III, shaking the entire regime to its foundations, and setting an example that would be widely imitated by revolutionaries in other autocracies.

As for Degaev, he suffered from what his fellow revolutionaries criticized as "moral squeamishness"—to be specific, a disposition to faint at the sight of blood that temperamentally unfitted him for the task ahead. To complete his misfortune, Pipes writes, he had crossed the path of Lieutenant Colonel Georgii Sudeikin, head of the Okhrana, the czar's security service. This feared organization had a total of 26 surveillance officers and eleven secret agents to its name: a smaller body than People's Will. But Sudeikin, described by Pipes as "mysterious and sinister," was a master of his special brand of policing.

"I always count on human weakness," was Sudeikin's favorite maxim. Acting on it, he corrupted some of the revolutionaries by means of bribery and persuaded others to place their perverted idealism at his service. Terror, he explained to potential turncoats, would only lead them to the gallows and oblige the regime to become even more op-

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DAVID PRYCE-JONES *is the author of* The Strange Death of the Soviet Empire, *among other books, and a senior editor of* National Review.

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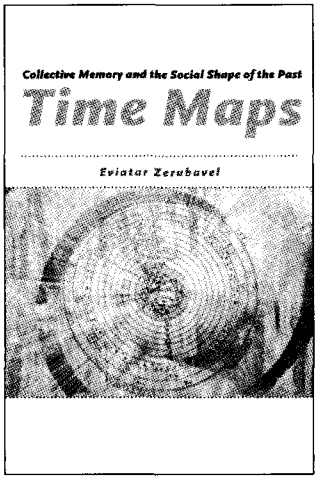

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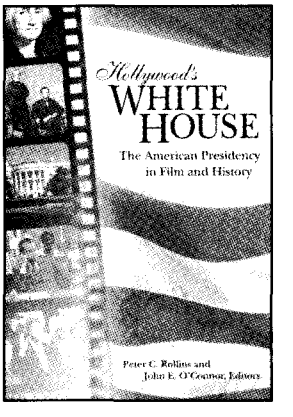

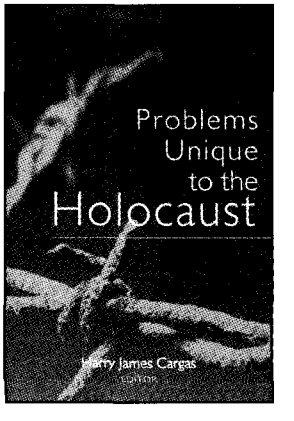

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pressive; it was wiser by far to collaborate with someone like himself, a decent reformist who was, or so he said, endeavoring to change the regime from within.

Sudeikin had a high opinion of himself; as Pipes tells the story, it was not unjustified. Many a youthful revolutionary fell for his line, and some would end up killing themselves in prison when they realized how thoroughly they had been suckered. One who failed to live up to Sudeikin's expectations was Vladimir, Degaev's younger brother, arrested at the age of seventeen for distributing seditious literature. Displaying the family tendency to go for "effects," he proved useless as a double agent.

Sergei's own story was more complex.Two of a kind in terms of social background and experience, the revolutionary Degaev and the policeman Sudeikin, each equally untrustworthy, shared an obsessive underworld of secret assignments, safe houses, alibis, and lies, and played out roles that in retrospect seem almost interchangeable. In reality another able scoundrel, Sudeikin nursed an increasingly urgent grievance against his police superiors and the czar for failing to acknowledge his superb talents. When he caught Degaev red-handed with the illicit printing press of People's Will, the pair's well-matched fantasies married. Together, they hatched a plot; inside that plot, each devised a sub-plot by which he would get the better of the other and advance his own ambitions.

Sudeikin contrived to let Degaev escape from prison. In return, Degaev was to betray his comrades, take over People's Will, disarm the revolution, have a meeting with Czar Alexander III and Sudeikin, and set in motion Russia's peaceful reform. Just in case the czar proved reluctant to reward him with the rank of general, Sudeikin had a further plan: he would resign his post and engineer, through People's Will, the assassination of Count Dmitri Tolstoy, the stand-offish Minister of the Interior. Such a step, he hoped, would establish how indispensable were his services in the Okhrana.

So well did Degaev carry out the first part of this joint program—betraying his comrades—that by 1883, as one of the terrorists would record in his memoirs, "The entire revolutionary organization was wholly in the hands of the police, which directed its top management and censored the revolutionary press." (*Maskirovka* is the Russian word for deeply deceptive practices of this sort, later perfected by the Communists with their various front organizations.) But then, switching allegiance, Degaev confessed to his few remaining comrades that he had been acting as Sudeikin's agent. Although this merited the death sentence, they reprieved him on condition that he execute Sudeikin—a job for which the squeamish Degaev needed the help of thugs. A trap was set for Sudeikin; the deed was horrific. Afterward, the belatedly appreciative czar mourned his secret-police chief in a panicky memorandum as "a loss that is positively irreplaceable."

DEGAEV AND his wife escaped to London and then evidently to Canada. From there, they moved to the United States where, in true immigrant style, he wholly reinvented himself. In St. Louis he was employed for nine years as the superintendent of a chemical firm. Then he and his wife were naturalized under the names of Alexander and Emma Pell. In 1897, he completed a doctorate in mathematics at Johns Hopkins, writing a dissertation with an almost metaphorical title, *On the Focal Surfaces of the Congruences of Tangents to a Given Surface*. That fall, he accepted the post of professor of mathematics at the recently founded University of South Dakota.

Quoting contemporary accounts from faculty and student journals, Pipes shows how popular the new professor was. He certainly kept his secrets to himself. Only a single strange incident pointed to his past. One day, it seems, a group of local toughs attacked some college boys. The locals were getting the better of the brawl when Degaev/Pell, apparently squeamish no longer, intervened. "When he struck a tough, the man went to the ground," an admiring witness reported. With similar ferocity, the terrorist Nikita hits Razumov and brings *Under Western Eyes* to its unforgettable close.

PIPES GIVES the last word to Vera Figner, who almost alone among the members of People's Will lived a long life and died of natural causes. In Stalin's day, some Russian intellectuals complained to her that the Bolsheviks had been no true revolutionaries but impostors and demagogues. Lowering her eyelids, she replied that what had occurred in Russia under Lenin was "the work of our own hands." Using murderous means for their ends, the Bolsheviks had done only what their terrorist predecessors had taught them.

In all sorts of cultures at all sorts of times, extreme religious or political faith has fueled a disposition to murder and martyrdom, separately or together. Pipes, in this tour de force, lets the facts speak for themselves. But the implication of *The Degaev Affair* is that People's Will was a prototype of contemporary terror movements. Peering out at us from numerous fascinating photographs in this book, the members of People's Will, for all the world resembling members of al Qaeda or the Taliban, project the air of abstracted self-absorption that marks the fanatic.

Some special frame of mind illuminates the suicide-martyr, who comes to believe that the cause to which he has devoted himself will be enhanced by the gift to it of his death. But what that special element is remains elusive. After all, those who sacrifice their lives in this manner have to take a great deal on trust.

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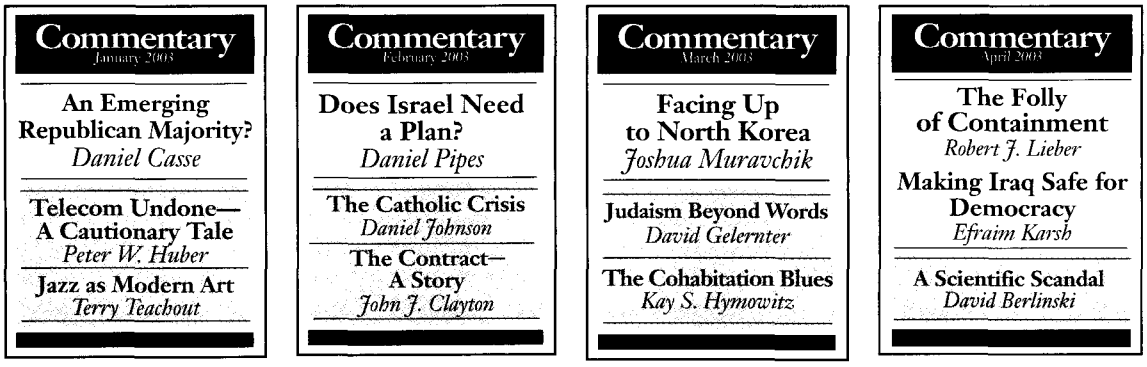

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Voluntary death risks being lost in the press of events as a freakish gesture achieving nothing, and outrages perpetrated in the name of a cause create widespread revulsion. In this respect, Pipes's moral is encouraging: it may take a while, and it may entail costs of its own, but reality in the end catches up with delusionary causes and conspiracies.

Among the Wahhabis

Hatred's Kingdom:
How Saudi Arabia Supports
the New Global Terrorism
by Dore Gold
Regnery. 309 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Alex Alexiev

AFTER A year and a half in which the war on terrorism consisted essentially of large tactical operations—liquidating the Taliban regime, destroying al Qaeda's base in Afghanistan, rounding up Islamist agents around the world—the U.S. finally took its first step of truly strategic significance. Operation Iraqi Freedom was intended to deny to the Baghdad regime and its Islamist fellow-travelers the ability to develop and use weapons of mass destruction, thus removing one of the most urgent long-term threats to America and its allies.

What will the next strategic stage in the war against terrorism look like? One might hope that it would be a campaign to destroy the vast infrastructure that begets, nurtures, and sustains Islamic extremism. To do that, the U.S. would have to accept a fact it has so far refused to face: that Saudi Arabia, our putative ally, has been and remains the chief ideological and financial enabler of our most virulent enemies. After Saddam, a showdown with the House of Saud is, or should be, inevitable.

Hatred's Kingdom, a timely new book by the Israeli scholar and diplomat Dore Gold, lays out the grounds for this looming confrontation more powerfully than any other recent writing on the subject. Gold's lucid, dispassionate, impressively researched narrative debunks much of the conventional wisdom, establishing in a systematic way the dark reality of Saudi involvement in fomenting terror.

TO FIND the root causes of Arab terrorism, Gold argues, we must examine not mainstream Islam but Wahhabism, the hate-filled, extremist fringe of the religion that is the official Saudi creed. As he points out, many of the "innovations" introduced by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-91), the founder of Saudi Arabia's state religion, were, in fact, major distortions and even outright falsifications of Islamic tradition. By declaring, for instance, that Muslims who rejected his own teachings were infidels who deserved death, al-Wahhab reversed two major tenets of Islam—that "there is no compulsion in religion" and that jihad against other Muslims is strictly prohibited. Yet, as the history of the House of Saud shows, the Wahhabis have almost invariably directed their murderous fury at fellow Muslims and, to this day, treat Shiites and Sufis like apostates.

As for Jews and Christians, al-Wahhab explicitly rejected the (partial) measure of preference and protection that other monotheists had long received in Muslim lands. He insisted that these supposed "peoples of the book" were nothing more than sorcerers and devil-worshippers, fit for annihilation—a venomous dictum that Saudi mosques spew out to this day.

Gold also explains the central role played by the Wahhabi sect in shaping the broader current of Islamic extremism. As he extensively documents, the Saudis have sheltered and co-opted virtually every Islamist ideologue and movement of the past century, from the leaders of previous generations like Muhammad Rida, Hasan al-Banna, and Abu al-Ala Mawdudi to more contemporary figures like Abdullah Azzam and Muhammad Qutb, the mentors of al Qaeda's leadership. Wahhabism remains the prototype ideology of all violent Islamists. As Gold quotes one radical cleric, "Osama bin Laden is a natural continuation from Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab."

As the Saudis began to grow flush with petrodollars in the 1970's, Gold writes, they became the chief international financiers of Islamic extremism. Operating through a bewildering array of interlocking charities and front organizations, Riyadh provided most of the funding for a vast network devoted not just to indoctrination but to anti-Western violence. Gold guides us through this sinister network, on which, as the Saudis themselves have admitted, they had spent the gigantic sum of $70 billion by the end of last year. There can be little doubt that this money has been a key factor in creating the terrorist threat we now face.

A further service performed by *Hatred's Kingdom* is to dismantle the self-serving propaganda of Saudi Arabia and its apologists. Since the attacks of September 11, the Saudis have maintained, for instance, that terrorism is a result of America's cruel indifference to the suffering of the Palestinians, a position to which many European governments and the American Left uncritically subscribe. Apart from the inconvenient fact that the vast majority of the more than 150,000 recent victims of Islamic terrorism have been Muslims, it is clear, as Gold demonstrates, that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has never mattered much to Riyadh. Despite their visceral dislike of Jews, the Saudis historically have paid little attention to them, feeling much more threatened by rival Arab powers like the Hashemites in Transjordan and Iraq, Nasserite socialism in Egypt,

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Syria, and Yemen, and, more recently, the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein. Indeed, the Saudis contributed no more than token aid to the Arab side in its various armed conflicts with Israel.

In exposing the Saudi connection to the world of Islamic terror, Gold might have gone still farther. His brief analysis of Saudi activities in the United States is a bit disappointing. There is much more to be said about Wahhabi dominance of the American Muslim establishment and the considerable influence of the Saudis in Washington. Virtually all of the Muslim leaders who posed for photographs with President Bush after the attacks of September 11 have been shown to be part of the Wahhabi lobby and to have extremist connections. Nor does Gold have much to say about the increasing penetration of Saudi-funded terrorist groups in the Indian subcontinent, which has become a hotbed of violent Islamic activities.

Still, these few oversights detract very little from Dore Gold's outstanding contribution. For the general reader interested in the origins of Middle Eastern terrorism, *Hatred's Kingdom* will shed a great deal of light; for policy-makers in Washington, it ought to be required reading.

Why Be Good?

Freedom Evolves
by Daniel C. Dennett
Viking. 347 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Adam Schulman

Daniel C. Dennett, a professor of cognitive science at Tufts, has made a name for himself as a scientific bad boy by writing books that boldly challenge our belief in the special status of man in the universe. In *Consciousness Explained* (1991), he argued that the human brain is nothing but a complex computing machine, and consciousness merely the software by which that machine operates. In *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (1995), he declared that not only are human beings the products of natural selection but so too are our thought, culture, ethics, and religion. Though many readers have been troubled by the extremism of Dennett's assault on human distinctiveness, his enthusiastic advocacy of the all-embracing explanatory power of modern science has earned him a loyal following.

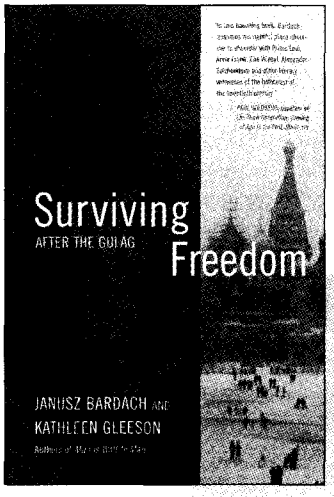
Dennett's latest book deals with the age-old problem of free will and moral responsibility, toward which one might have expected him to adopt a severely skeptical attitude. Instead, he promises to show that, despite the implications of his earlier work, there are grounds for believing that we are genuinely free and morally responsible for our actions. On this question alone, it seems, Dennett is strangely reluctant to give up his belief in man's unique status.

Dennett describes himself as a "naturalist." He believes that the world consists of nothing but atoms and molecules moving under the iron necessity of physical laws. But if such premises are true, does it not follow that human freedom and moral responsibility are an illusion? Only, according to Dennett, if we are taken in by "myths" like the traditional religious belief in an immortal soul or the Cartesian idea of the mind as a "thinking substance," somehow standing apart from and controlling our bodies. By contrast, his own more scientific argument, he assures us, will lead to "a stronger, wiser doctrine of freedom."

Through the operation of natural selection, Dennett asserts, organisms can evolve with greater and

Adam Schulman *teaches the liberal arts at St. John's College, Annapolis.*

SURVIVAL & IDENTITY



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greater "degrees of freedom." Indeed, a crude kind of freedom is already present in primitive organisms that can avoid harm by responding to particular physical stimuli. From such simple switches turned on or off by an environmental change, evolution eventually produces complex "choice machines" that evaluate reams of data before selecting the most favorable option. As more sophisticated choice machines evolve, it becomes steadily more appropriate, as Dennett already explained in *The Intentional Stance* (1987), to describe their behavior in intentional terms—to speak, for example, of a cell *trying* to become two cells, of a spider *hoping* to catch a fly, etc.

CHOICE IN this limited sense may be explicable on Darwinian grounds. But to be free in the *moral* sense means doing what is right for its own sake, not merely for selfish reasons. How could such a capacity emerge if evolution is driven entirely by natural selection? After all, Darwinism presupposes that new faculties will be selected and preserved only to the extent that they contribute to the survival of the organisms that exercise them.

Dennett concedes that genuine or pure altruism—doing good for another without any expectation of good for oneself—is elusive and paradoxical, and may be unattainable through natural selection. But he does find room in evolution for what he calls "pseudo-altruism": a kind of far-sighted self-interest that recognizes the long-term benefits of cooperation and even of (temporary) self-sacrifice.

Nevertheless, one might reply, even if cooperation is on the whole advantageous, and is often buttressed by fear of punishment for misbehavior, why should an individual not break the rules if he can get away with it, especially when the payoff is big? "In these cases," Dennett concedes, "the voice of temptation speaks with alarming rationality: *Nobody will ever know, and think of what you can gain!*" Here we enter the "problematic territory of human free will, the only variety that carries moral weight." How do we get there by way of evolution?

Dennett's answer goes like this: once cooperation is an option, it becomes advantageous to appear good to others. On the whole, the most cost-effective way to convince others that you are good is simply to *be* good. In other words, the elaborate deception required in order to seem upright while secretly practicing injustice is more trouble than it is worth, and the disposition to act unjustly will therefore tend to die out under the pressure of natural selection.

Thus it is, in Dennett's reasoning, that morality arose by accident as an evolutionary advantage and spread throughout the species, eventually yielding a population of intelligent agents sincerely devoted to the good of others. And what about those whose brains were untouched by this development? Are we justified in blaming them? More broadly, in what sense can people be held morally responsible for their actions? As Dennett recognizes, it is not sufficient to point to "the good of the species" or "the survival of our genes" as grounds for moral praise and blame.

To solve this last problem, Dennett points out that people seem to *want* to be held responsible for their actions and character and to be praised for their virtues, even if that means being blamed or punished for their vices. Despite what modern science may teach, human beings simply feel themselves accountable and are remarkably impervious to the evidence that praise and blame are unwarranted. That being the case, Dennett concludes, it is proper to *hold* people responsible precisely to the extent that they are willing to *take* responsibility.

BY THE end of his long, ingenious, and often entertaining argument,

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has Dennett shown that one can embrace the most austere forms of naturalism and Darwinism and come away with even stronger grounds for believing in human freedom and moral responsibility? The answer, not surprisingly, is no.

By the use of various Darwinian "just-so stories," Dennett can plausibly point to evolution as the engine of "pseudo-altruistic" behavior, whereby an individual's larger interests are best secured by cooperation and self-control. But he cannot begin to come to terms with what one might call the "ring of Gyges" problem: how a person should behave if, like the famous shepherd in Plato's *Republic*, he were lucky enough to come upon a ring making himself and his actions invisible to others. The best Dennett can offer is the admission that certain "bizarrely free spirits" are simply unmoved by the social pressures that, thanks to evolution, keep the rest of us in line.

Nor does Dennett come close to providing a justification for the feeling that good people deserve to be rewarded and bad people deserve to be punished. There is, in fact, something almost comical about the mental contortions Dennett goes through in his effort to square the moral circle. The closer he gets to the promised proof, the shakier and more circular his argument becomes: we are capable of intentions if we adopt the "intentional stance," we should be held responsible "as long as we feel responsible," "wherever thinking gets done, people do things for reasons that are their reasons." These are little more than verbal tricks, contrivances, and evasions.

Will such arguments persuade scientists? I very much doubt it. Nor will they convince anyone hoping to defend a more robust idea of moral autonomy than seems compatible with present-day natural science. We then have a choice: either to follow the naturalist argument out to its dispiriting conclusion—namely, that moral autonomy is a fiction—or to entertain the possibility that modern science, however powerful it may be in its own domain, can give only a partial, provisional, and hypothetical account of our inner life, and cannot begin to settle the deepest questions we ask about ourselves.

No Exit?

Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx

by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc

Scribner. 408 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

In *Random Family*, the journalist Adrian Nicole LeBlanc traces the lives of a Puerto Rican family in the South Bronx over the course of more than a decade, beginning in the mid-1980's, at the height of the crack epidemic, and concluding in 2001. Hers is by no means the first account to be written about everyday life in the harsh, insular culture of the inner city during this period, but it is the most detailed, intimate, and extensive—and it will make your jaw drop.

LeBlanc's title is a bit misleading. Her book explores the lives of a group of people that is only barely recognizable as a family. Its genealogy is less like a tree than a dense thicket of stepfathers, boyfriends, half sisters, cousins, nieces by ex-girlfriends of half brothers, girlfriends of sons of daughters' fathers, and so on. In the Tremont section of the Bronx, women have children by so many different men and men by

Kay S. Hymowitz, *a contributing editor of* City Journal, *is the author of the forthcoming* Liberation's Children: Parents and Kids in a Postmodern Age *(Ivan Dee).*

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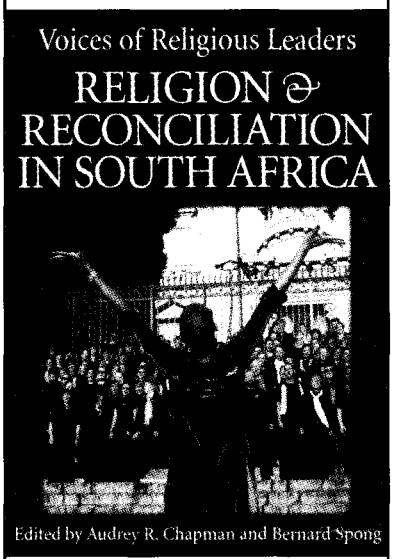

Instrumental in post-apartheid South Africa's efforts to come to terms with its past, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was led by clerics rather than lawyers and judges and was shaped by and imbued with religious content. Its final report was submitted to the Mandela administration in October, 1998.

This volume springs from a series of in-depth interviews in which 33 key religious leaders illuminate issues and questions raised by the TRC. Some of their conclusions are not what you might expect.

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so many different women that everyone seems to be related.

Consider Jessica and Coco, the lodestars of LeBlanc's narrative. Jessica has her first baby at sixteen by a man named Puma, and two more—twins—by Puma's brother Willy a year and a half later. After being locked up for her involvement in another boyfriend's drug business, she has more babies—twins again—by a prison guard. As for Coco, she is the mother of two daughters by Jessica's half brother, Cesar (thus making her Jessica's "sister-in-law"). In addition to these two children, the first born when she was fifteen, Coco has a daughter by a small-time thug named Wishman, another by an equally disreputable character named Kodak, and a son by Frankie, her live-in drug-dealer boyfriend. All of these babies come with sets of grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins who come in and out of their lives while still managing to inspire genuine feelings of love and loyalty.

LeBlanc's title is also misleading in another way: this family, such as it is, is not just random; it is capricious, often cruelly so, and especially toward children. Living with her three young daughters in the one-bedroom apartment of her own mother, Jessica would, LeBlanc writes, "head out to the store for milk and not come back for five days." Usually she is with Boy George, a legendarily successful local drug dealer who keeps a harem of women around the neighborhood. When George feels like making time for Jessica, he often beats her, or worse: once he makes her sobbing daughters do battle in a kind of cockfight and another time he forces her to play Russian roulette with a loaded gun.

Jessica's half brother Cesar is less sadistic but equally unreliable. Although his feelings for Coco continue over many years, "Cesar did not confuse staying true with fidelity"; one of his many girlfriends even takes to handing him condoms as he goes out the door. Coco herself is the most generous, loving, and trustworthy person in this dystopia, but even she uproots her daughters arbitrarily, smacks them when she is overwhelmed, and allows groups of unsavory male visitors to freeload off their limited stores of food.

For these residents of the South Bronx, chaos is the stuff of everyday life. In one short paragraph early in the book, we read that Jessica, feeling unloved, begins to draw a knife across her thighs, receives as punishment a vicious beating by her mother, overdoses, is rushed to the hospital by her mother's boyfriend, has her stomach pumped, and, finally, learns that she is pregnant with twins. There are hundreds of paragraphs like this in *Random Family*, each a bombardment of cocaine, sex, beatings, parties, mother's ex-boyfriends who stagger in doped up and forget to leave for several weeks, children wandering around sobbing, shouting, punching each other, or piled up in front of the blue glow of the television. By the time Jessica's oldest daughter is two, she comes down with an infection that shows she has been sexually abused, though no one could possibly guess by whom; there are simply too many people passing through the apartment where she lives, and Jessica gladly engaged the babysitting services of just about all of them.

STILL, MUCH as the baby-making practices, violence, and general mayhem of this random family confirm some of the darker stereotypes about the urban poor, the book manages not to read like a brief on underclass dysfunction. LeBlanc shows how individual personality and temperament intersect with the brutal conditions of inner-city poverty to produce familiar human types who might have turned out differently had they developed in more benign circumstances.

One of the more striking figures is Jessica's sometime boyfriend, Boy George Rivera: a brilliant and powerfully ambitious drug entrepreneur, a kind of Michael Bloomberg of the South Bronx. George, whose father left when he was an infant and whose mother beat him so viciously he ran away by the time he was ten, has been ruthless enough to climb up through the ranks of the local drug business but shrewd enough to avoid touching the stuff himself.

Setting up mills to manufacture his own special brand of heroin, he calls the product "Obsession," gives it a ritzy logo—a king's crown—and is soon pulling in half a million dollars a week. He builds a country home with gold-plated bathroom fixtures and a swimming pool whose tiles spell out his initials and depict his trademark crown. He buys a Ferrari, a Lamborghini, a Bentley, a Porsche, and a Mercedes, to which he adds $50,000's worth of James Bond-style accessories.

By the time George is arrested, he has become a Master of the Bronx Universe. Having been advised by a stockbroker and a financial consultant "to diversify his business interests," he has invested in a water-filtration company and is planning to build a strip mall and to franchise a fast-food chain. Still, despite studying the court transcripts and consulting with his lawyer on strategy with his usual acuteness, this dangerous but gifted thug is sentenced to life imprisonment without hope of parole. At the time, he is twenty-three years old.

Jessica and Coco are examples of the same complex interplay of nature and nurture. Jessica is narcissistic and impulsive, but as hungry for a devoted man as she is ill equipped to find one. Coco, an altogether different woman, has a heart as big as the Bronx and tries to do right by her kids. Yet nothing in her life has given her the remotest idea of how to combine her strengths with the foresight that would make them work to her ad-

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vantage. She is forever brought down by crises, many of them of her own making. By the end of the book, the eldest daughters of both women appear poised to follow in their mothers' paths.

Random Family is something rare: a scrupulously honest description of life in the inner city. Avoiding the damp swamps of Jonathan-Kozol-style sentimentality, Le Blanc makes no effort to underplay the cruelty, betrayal, and neglect that her subjects—people whom she has clearly come to like—visit upon each other and, most awfully, upon their children. With the exception of a few scattered passages of interpretation, LeBlanc has released Jessica, Coco, and the rest of her characters from what must have been her own powerful desire to explain and excuse their behavior. She has allowed them to walk through her book as fully rounded, independent actors.

For the people who inhabit *Random Family*'s universe, it is hard to see how most of the well-chewed answers to inner-city poverty could make much of a difference. Sex education? Jessica and Coco's babies are not unwanted—or wanted, for that matter. Their babies just happen, and, much as the bourgeois mind might consider teen parenthood a personal and social disaster, the view in the inner city is that a baby, no matter how young its mother, is an opportunity for "hoping and growing." And what good are condoms or birth-control pills for people who have never learned any of the habits of self-discipline that would allow them to use them reliably?

What about "quality day care," the holy grail of feminist policy advocates? It could indeed bring some temporary benefits: Coco's daughter thrives in a Head Start program before she is forced to leave because of a serious asthma condition. But how much could five hours a day of Dr. Seuss and "Now I Know My ABC's" do for a child who spends most of her time with an immature mother, the mother's drug-dealer boyfriend, and his cronies? Even school reform seems a fool's errand under these circumstances. How can children living in the domestic equivalent of the median strip of I-95 ever learn to sit still and concentrate?

But when it comes to the bigger social and political picture, *Random Family* has very real limitations. Jessica and Coco may emerge as somewhat hopeless cases, but they are, after all, just individuals, and LeBlanc makes no effort to indicate how representative they are. One would not know from *Random Family* that, by 2000, the rate of teen pregnancy in the U.S. had dropped to its lowest level in twenty years or that, since 1995, Hispanic child poverty has declined by a third. Nor, for that matter, do the book's stories bring into focus the more promising side of life in the South Bronx: the large number of law-abiding, job-holding citizens whose struggle to live decent lives is poisoned by the likes of Boy George, Cesar, and Jessica.

And what about welfare reform, the most dramatic effort in a generation to alter the culture of the inner city? Here *Random Family* manages to offer a bit of hope. After the new welfare law requires her to find a job, Coco appears briefly buoyed by the routines of the workplace. One can even imagine that, if she did not have to rely for childcare on a troubled preadolescent daughter and a boyfriend who uses the kitchen for bagging crack cocaine, those work habits might bring some long-lasting benefits to her family.

That hope certainly finds considerable support in some of the recent findings about the effects of welfare reform. Such studies will *not* make a reader's jaw drop; but in the end they may tell us as much about the condition of today's American underclass as we learn from the sensational, heart-breaking details of the life of one random family.

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Daniel Patrick Moynihan
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"I HAVE EVEN HEARD OF THEE, THAT THE SPIRIT OF
THE GODS IS IN THEE, AND THAT LIGHT, AND UNDERSTANDING,
AND EXCELLENT WISDOM IS TO BE FOUND IN THEE."
—DANIEL 5:14

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Russell Berman, Stephen Haber, and Barry R. Weingast are senior fellows at the Hoover Institution.

Two crucial debates underlie America's present situation in the Middle East. The first concerns whether the United States can graft a democratic system on an authoritarian regime such as Iraq's, a state that has no history of democratic rule. The second debate involves the sources of differences between the West—the societies of Western Europe and North America—and other cultures around the globe.

To understand how Western political and economic systems might be transplanted into a post-Saddam Iraq, we need to understand what is "Western" about our culture, politics, and economics. Those three aspects were not only developed in tandem but mutually support one another.

The West's first distinctive characteristic is its culture of literacy and individuality. Written records undercut oral myths, established factual accuracy, and allowed authors to adopt critical positions that challenged received opinion. Over several centuries, this gave rise to a culture whereby individual integrity trumped the conformism of community doctrine. This legacy of literacy and critical thinking became linked to a Judeo-Christian religious sensibility. The result is a culture that emphasizes the sanctity of life, the value of the individual, and redemption through historical progress.

The West's second distinctive characteristic is its political institutions. Those institutions take three forms: electoral suffrage, federalism, and checks and balances. Those forms operate jointly to limit the authority of government and thereby reduce the stakes of politics. They also work to limit corruption and rent seeking (a person or group seeking to obtain special political favors at the expense of others). Those institutions accomplish these goals either by creating ex ante vetoes that limit their leaders' discretion (for example, presidents must obtain congressional approval before acting on new policy proposals) or by creating ex post sanctions on leaders who exceed their authority (by being voted out of office).

The West's third characteristic is its system of economic institutions that support markets. Markets exist in other parts of the world, but only in the West do political institutions enforce property rights with such uniformity. Indeed, in most developing societies political officials prey on markets and private property. In many nations, administrators enforce some individuals' property rights but not others—giving rise to cartels and thereby precluding competitive markets.

The combination of a culture of individualism, institutions of limited government, and free market economies has succeeded in unleashing human creativity, producing wealth, and raising people out of poverty.

As beneficial as it would be to reproduce these conditions in Iraq, we should not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. More than a change of regime will be required. **Establishing democratic capitalism will involve a profound transformation of cultural values, governmental institutions, and economic behavior.** This is a worthy goal, but it will require a long-term commitment.

Too often, new democracies in former authoritarian regimes fail because they lack one or more of the three critical characteristics that distinguish the West. Establishing a stable democratic-capitalist system in a post-Saddam Iraq will require both political and economic reform, as well as encouraging the virtues of a free society among Iraqis.

— Russell Berman, Stephen Haber, and Barry R. Weingast

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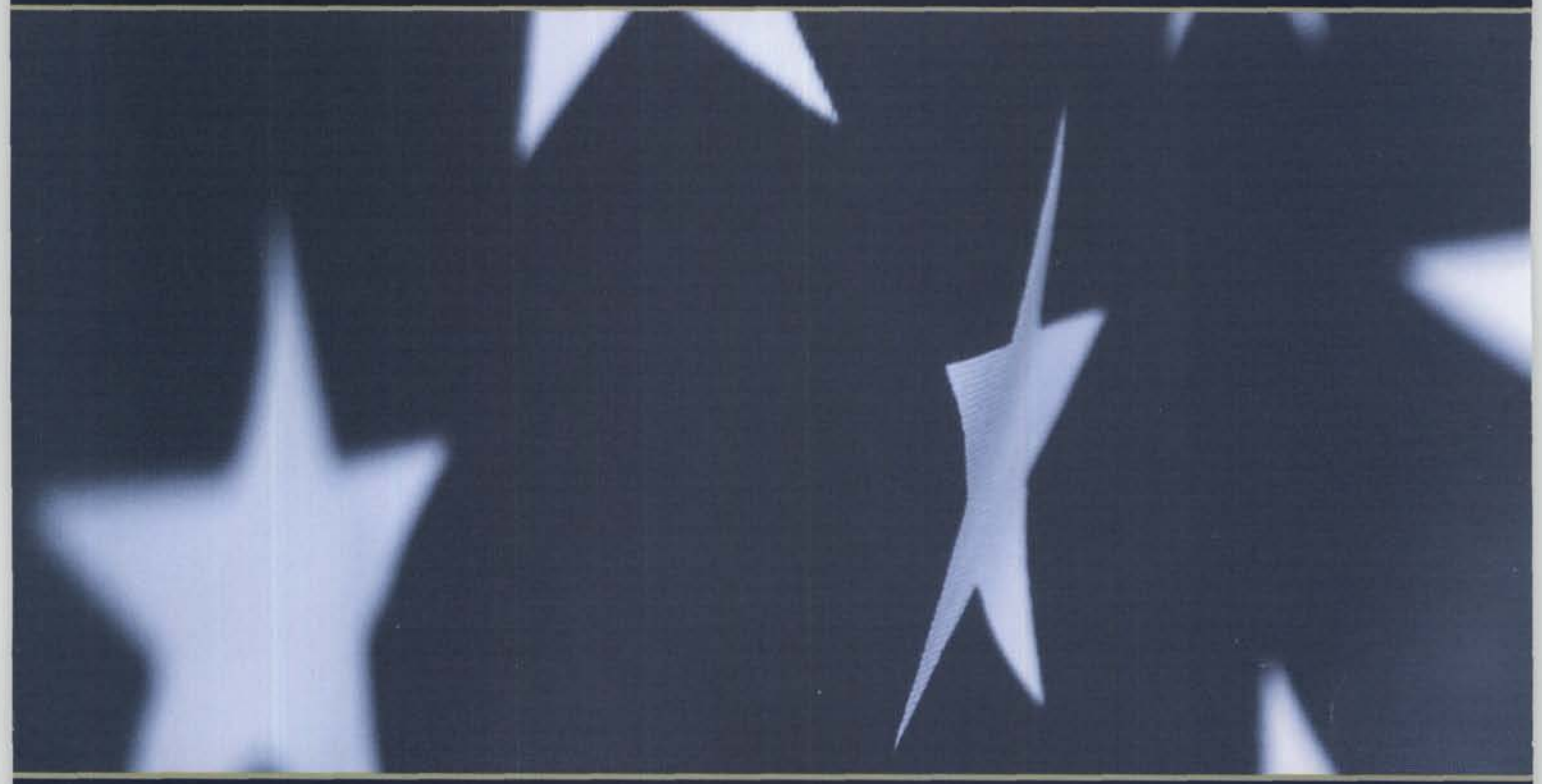
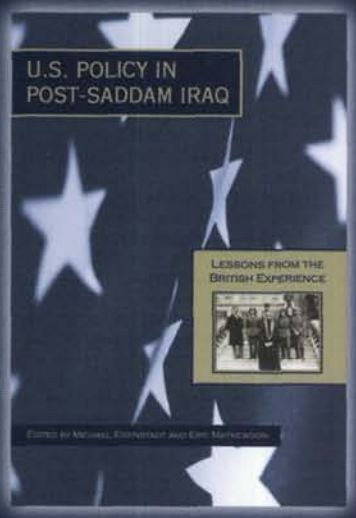
"Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators." —Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude, March 1917





April 2003, $19.95
84 pp., ISBN 0-944029-84-1

U.S. POLICY IN POST-SADDAM IRAQ
LESSONS FROM THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

EDITED BY MICHAEL EISENSTADT AND ERIC MATHEWSON

American troops promising to end a despot's tyranny and usher in an era of freedom and prosperity in Iraq are likely to confront many of the same challenges faced by Britain when its forces entered that country during World War I. Because Britain's Iraq experience—which soon saw the abandonment of London's original, lofty aspirations and eventually ended with the violent overthrow of Iraq's British-backed monarchy—may well be the historical reference Iraqis themselves use, the United States and its allies would be well advised to review the record of Britain's engagement in Iraq and draw the right lessons from it. In this timely mongraph, contributing historians and military affairs experts provide much-needed context to the ambitious U.S. effort to reconstruct and transform postwar Iraq.

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